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READER

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Ready for reform, Chicago?

Mayor Lightfoot vows to change the city
from the ways of Rahm.

By BEN JORAVSKY **6**



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READER (ISSN 1096-6919) IS PUBLISHED WEEKLY
BY STM READER, LLC
2930 S. MICHIGAN, SUITE 102 CHICAGO, IL 60616
312-392-2934, CHICAGOREADER.COM

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THIS WEEK ON CHICAGOREADER.COM

Movie Tuesday:
Gotta move!

Inspired by the release of *John Wick: Chapter 3*, we present five of the best choreographed films ever made.

David Reifman has
left the building

As the Department of Planning and Development commissioner departs, megadevelopers lose one of their biggest cheerleaders.



In case you missed it

This week's top story is Maya Dukmasova's investigation into Pangea, the real estate company that's claimed credit for reviving south and west side communities—even as it's filed more than 9,000 eviction cases since 2009.

CITY LIFE

SIGHTSEEING

Miss Teen Wordpower

The story of forgotten Chicago vaudevillian and superfast typist Birdie Reeve

By JEFF NICHOLS

From 1935 until her death in 1996, Birdie Reeve Kay ran a secretarial service in the Hyde Park Bank Building. She answered phones, transcribed tapes, and typed papers for University of Chicago students. It was no secret Birdie was once a vaudeville star. Billed as the world's fastest typist, she wowed audiences with her effortless speed and her photographic memory. Birdie once played 20 men at chess simultaneously, beating them blindfolded. But just as Birdie was no ordinary stenographer, she was also no run-of-the-mill survivor of show business.

Bertha "Birdie" Reeve was born in 1907, the middle daughter of Thomas and Jennie Reeve, both Jewish immigrants from England. In 1912, Thomas shot and nearly killed his children's doctor outside his Albany Park office. "Dr. Kelly broke up my home," he told the police. Jennie admitted she had fallen in love but had never acted on her desire. At trial, the real estate broker claimed he shot Kelly with the physician's own revolver in a struggle. The defense also banked on the fear a conviction would leave his children parentless, as a court would likely decide Jennie was an unfit

adulteress and remove the children from her custody. Although the prosecution accused Thomas of hiding behind his wife's skirts, the jury acquitted him.

Using evidence from his trial, Thomas divorced Jennie and won custody of his three girls. After authorities discovered the Reeves were living in a hut Thomas built on a beach in Uptown, the girls were temporarily placed with relatives. In October 1914, Thomas was convicted of fraud involving an imaginary apartment project called Spoon Island Flats. He emerged from jail the following year as the inventor of "Universcript," a system of stenog-

raphy promising mastery of communication.

Taking over a shuttered college in Rochester, Indiana, Reeve proved a fanatical promoter of his new Universcript school. "Reeve can teach us how to write, how to talk, how to build, how to travel, how to print, how to obtain power at insignificant cost and how to harness nature's resources," claimed one ad. After Reeve began distributing expensive but bizarrely decorated Universcript chess boards to army training camps, the War Department opened an investigation. The feds struggled to figure out how Universcript worked. Reeve, one investigator concluded, "had a subject which was deep indeed, or he was crazy."

While Reeve initially won over the local press for his moxie, he became unhinged as his school failed. One ad asked potential investors whether they stood with the "Supporters of Merit," who represent "everything noble and right," or with the "Throttlers of Merit," a group comprised of "Christ-Killers' and everything derogatory in life."

In 1920, Birdie and her sister Rose were briefly committed to the Jewish Home for the Friendless in Chicago. Thomas had refused to send them to school, asserting they had each developed under his tutelage a vocabulary of 60,000 words. Relocating to London, Ontario, Thomas told the provincial census his religion was "Universcript."

Thomas took to the road with Birdie in 1922, presenting her to local newspapers as a champion speed typist and master of the English language—a product of his instructions. Sponsored by typewriter manufacturers, Birdie gave presentations in department stores, fraternal organizations, and high schools. She then hit the vaudeville circuit.

Incredibly, Birdie typed with only her index and middle fingers. "A typewriter is not a piano," she once told a reporter. "Why, just think how it would hamper a horse to have to run on ten legs." Birdie's act, one columnist marveled, "is more remarkable than anything done by prize fighters or marathon runners. That the brain should divide those words instantaneously into letters and write them down 20 a second is a real athletic marvel."

Whatever her father's history of grifting, Birdie had talent. Newsreel footage shows Birdie joyfully typing with shocking speed. Asking theater audiences to call out the names of prominent individuals, Birdie could then effortlessly recite one of their speeches while speed-typing an entirely different speech. She then passed her pages to stunned theatergoers to proofread. Fielding audience questions at one concert, she rattled the contents of the periodic table of elements and words rhyming with "cupidity" off the top of her head. In addition to her amazing agility and recall, theater



Birdie Reeve in May 1924
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CITY LIFE

critics praised Birdie for her comedic chops.

Wherever she toured, Thomas used Birdie to promote his incomprehensible stenographic lessons. In 1927, Thomas fired Birdie's booking agency, which replied that Thomas should "find some work and not depend upon your daughter to support you." Perhaps with a different manager, one whose sole focus was Birdie, she might have thrived as a performer. The Depression turned the teen wonder into a typist looking for work in Hyde Park.

Birdie last made national news in 1935. Divorcing her husband on grounds of cruelty and abandonment, Birdie refused a court order to allow her estranged husband visitation rights. Birdie pleaded that she was only protecting her four-year-old daughter. Whereas Thomas Reeve went to jail for skipping out on a hotel bill at the end of her touring career, Birdie sat in the Cook County Jail for contempt of court until she revealed the location of her daughter.

Near the end of his life, Thomas Light Reeve branched off as a romance novelist. (Sample prose: "[Her] robust vitality, vibrant exuberance, dynamic buoyancy and her natural

strong urge for mating and her craving desire for the opposite sex and connubial bliss gave vent in unhindered and unrestrained form and broke down all the dikes and barriers with its stormy, raging flood.") Long passages of self-published novel *Myrtle Green* are dedicated toward its hero, Dr. Normal Light, explaining the *actual* meaning of the Bible. In an autobiographical conclusion portraying the author as a misunderstood, persecuted genius, Thomas declared that Birdie's "merits had to be polluted with gags and drivel to suit moronic heathen minded halfwits," but her effort to "exemplify Light . . . will live . . ."

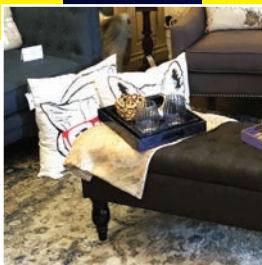
Thomas died in 1944. Remarried, Birdie poured her talents into her business. A win-some 1982 profile in the *Hyde Park Herald* mentioned Birdie had once been invited to meet President Calvin Coolidge in the Oval Office, but avoided her unsettled childhood. Her father's system of shorthand was "as unorthodox" as his two-fingered typing system, Birdie admitted. Her office at the Hyde Park Bank Building is now occupied by a clinical psychologist. 

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Lori Lightfoot HAL BAIM

POLITICS

Ready for reform, Chicago?

Mayor Lightfoot vows to change the city from the ways of Rahm.

By **BEN JORAVSKY**

As a sign of my commitment to a new Chicago, I went to Mayor Lori Lightfoot's inauguration at the DePaul basketball arena, thus breaking my old pledge to never, *ever* set foot in that place.

Technically, it's the Wintrust Arena. But on Wintrust, I'm a little like Sox fans who refuse to call the stadium where their favorite team plays anything other than Comiskey Park. It's tradition, baby.

Whatever you call it, nothing symbolizes the let-them-eat-cake excess of Mayor Rahm's backroom wheeling and dealing quite like this midsize arena at 22nd and Michigan.

Ostensibly built to house the DePaul University basketball teams, it was originally supposed to be partly paid for with \$55 million worth of property tax dollars, largely diverted from our dead-broke schools.

That funding was approved in the summer of 2013 on a City Council voice vote, hastily gavelled through by the mayor, as though he wanted to sneak it by the council without public debate.

When activists erupted in protest over spending public dollars on a private university, Rahm substituted hotel/motel tax money for the original property tax dollars. Like he figured we were too stupid to realize that the joint was still being publicly funded.

This maneuver passed for a solution to a public relations problem in the early years of Mayor Rahm's Chicago. (DePaul also kicked in about \$70 million to help pay for the arena.)

Before all was said and done, Rahm spent that \$55 million in TIF money, originally intended for the arena, on a project at Navy Pier. How that's legal, I will never know.

Bottom line—when the b-ball arena finally opened in 2017, I declared I would never, ever go there—you know, like Rahm or DePaul or anyone else for that matter remotely cared.

But, alas, there I was for Monday's big event, ushered in by Maya Dukmasova, my *Reader* colleague. Maya said I had to go because . . . it's history! Plus, I had to write about it.

Man, the things I let those millennials talk me into. Also, I was thinking—you know, I paid for this thing, I might as well check it out.

By chance, the Lightfoot press team put me on press row right next to Greg Hinz, my old poker-playing pal, who's a political columnist for *Crain's Chicago Business*.

Over the years, Greg and I have been on the opposite sides of several TIF debates. Generally speaking, I want the program abolished, while Greg is more of the I-never-met-a-downtown-TIF-deal-that-I-don't-love persuasion.

True to form, he started right in on me.

"Hey, Ben, how many articles did you write criticizing Rahm for using TIF funds for this?" he asked.

"A lot," I responded.

"Some irony in you being here for this."

Well, I'm glad Maya talked me into attending 'cause it was quite a show. All the top dogs were on stage. And it was kind of cool to see Rahm and his predecessor—Mayor Daley—playing second fiddle to Lightfoot, our first Black woman mayor.

And I did get a big kick out of seeing a caption on the overhead scoreboard that read: "Don't remember of the city of Chicago, Rahm."

I'm not sure what the scoreboard operator was trying to say with that caption. But if taxpayer dollars had anything to do with constructing that scoreboard, that caption may be the best thing we get from this deal.

I have to admit I shed a tear or two when I watched Mayor Lightfoot's tearful tribute to her 90-something-year-old mother who was sitting in the front row.

As for the speech, there's an old saying by Jerome Holtzman—the Hall of Fame baseball writer—that there's "no cheering in the press box." As *Chicago Magazine's* Edward McClelland, who was sitting nearby, reminded me during the proceedings.

Sorry, Edward—but I had to cheer when Lightfoot vowed to rebuild our "safety net, starting with repairing our broken mental health safety net."

In his first budget, Mayor Rahm closed six clinics, insisting we were too broke to afford mental health clinics, even in poor, high-crime

neighborhoods where they were very much needed.

But, again, we had enough money to build that DePaul arena. Damn, I'm getting outraged all over again!

The biggest cheer from the crowd came when Lightfoot promised to strip aldermen of dictatorial control over everything that goes on in their wards, while declaring that no "elected official should ever profit from his office."

That was a direct jab at Alderman Ed Burke and his infamous property tax business.

Lightfoot went on to promise to bring integrity to Chicago government.

"I realize that putting integrity and Chicago government in the same sentence is pretty strange," she wisecracked. "For years, they said 'Chicago ain't ready for reform.' Well, get ready, reform is here."

Good line—whoever wrote it.

Lightfoot also got a cheer from the good-government crowd when she promised to "get the fiscal house in order."

She didn't specify what she intends to do on that front. But we all know one of her biggest challenges will be to figure out how to pay for her promises of safer neighborhoods, better schools, and affordable housing—not to mention pension obligations, new police and fire contracts, a new teacher contract, etc.

This brings me to my first suggestion of the Mayor Lightfoot era.

As the first act of getting the "fiscal house in order," Mayor Lightfoot should join the lawsuit filed by the Grassroots Collaborative against the \$1.3 billion TIF handout for Lincoln Yards, the upscale development in a north side neighborhood that's already gentrifying.

How's that for a new beginning, Chicago? Diverting money from wealthy developers to give to the rest of us, instead of the other way around.

I guess we shall soon see just how much reform Chicago really is ready for.

Best of luck, Mayor Lightfoot.

@joravben

NEWS & POLITICS



Nasir Blackwell (left) with William Evans, Green ReEntry case manager, and John Hooks, IMAN intervention outreach worker
COURTESY NASIR BLACKWELL

NEWS

Civic engagement doesn't die in prison

A state bill outlines an education program for those about to be released.

By **CHRISTIAN BELANGER**

In 1992, Nasir Blackwell was desperate. He had been convicted of murder and sentenced to be executed. While incarcerated in Pontiac Correctional Center, he visited the law library—a six-by-nine-foot cell, most of its books published in the 50s—and picked up a volume on homicide. “I began studying law. I was studying history, and so I began studying the history of jurisprudence. I could not believe how law was man-made,” he says. “It just became a passion. It helped me litigate on behalf of people that were incarcerated. I was empowering voices—teaching people how to study law, [helping] if they needed a transfer.”

Blackwell's death sentence was thrown out by the Illinois Supreme Court in 1996; he received a 49-year prison term after his retrial. In prison, he eventually made it to Danville Correctional Center, where there was a bigger library, and read nearly all the books there. He also helped organize a tutoring program at Danville that, he says, significantly improved educational participation in the prison, whose inmate population until then had a low literacy rate. And he formed groups with other in-

mates to lead conversations around masculinity, conflict, and basic civics. “We talked about the democratic process and government involvement. There's a lot of negative feedback [from other prisoners] telling you the system is rigged,” Blackwell says. “Once you have the knowledge that you can speak out against an issue that affects you, that's empowering.”

Upon his release on parole in 2015, he began organizing for the Inner-City Muslim Action Network (IMAN). Now, Blackwell, 54, and IMAN are part of a coalition working on a new piece of statewide legislation that would give more inmates access to the knowledge he found so liberating. House Bill 2541, which is due for a full vote from the state Senate later this month, would put in place a civics education program for people who are about to be released from prison, taught primarily by their fellow prisoners—one of the first of its kind in the country.

The bill is in large part the brainchild of Christina Rivers, a political science professor at DePaul University. While much of Rivers's early work focused on constitutional law—she wrote a book about the 14th Amendment →

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NEWS & POLITICS

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and the Voting Rights Act—she says that in recent years her research has shifted toward the problem of felony disenfranchisement. In drafting an early version of the bill, Rivers got a boost from her students; she used some of the research papers from a class on law, politics, and mass incarceration as inspiration. (The class itself alternates annually: one year it's taught at DePaul, the other at Stateville Correctional Center, just north of Joliet.)

Voting rights laws vary widely among states. In Maine and Vermont, felons can cast a ballot while imprisoned, while a dozen other states require the formerly incarcerated to jump through administrative hurdles—such as a governor's pardon or petition to a court—before they can vote again. In Delaware, anyone convicted of certain crimes, including murder and bribery, is permanently disenfranchised.

Illinois has one of the more liberal set of laws: all felons have their voting rights automatically restored when released from prison. In recent years, advocacy groups like Chicago Votes have also ramped up organizing in Cook County Jail, running voter registration drives within one of the largest detention facilities in the country. Last fall, then-Gov. Bruce Rauner vetoed a bill that would've turned Cook County Jail into a polling location for pretrial detainees. In a statement to the House, he argued that one particular section of the bill—which required the Department of Corrections and county jails to disseminate voter registration information to prisoners upon their release—exceeded the “legitimate role” of law enforcement personnel. It was written by now-Lt. Gov. Juliana Stratton; a modified version, put forth by state Sen. Omar Aquino, sailed through the Senate in early April, and is now in a House committee.

But even if voting rights are secured for pretrial detainees and former felons, there's still the problem of ensuring that people know how to exercise those rights. While it's difficult to get exact data on how many formerly incarcerated people vote, a 2009 study by political scientist Michael V. Haselswerdt found that only about 5 percent of eligible ex-felons had voted in a 2005 election in New York, compared to 39 percent of the general population. One reason could be that those released from prison don't know exactly how to exercise newly restored rights.

“Preventing someone from exercising their rights, or perpetuating a system where huge groups of people are unaware of their rights, can in itself be a statement about what voting

rights are,” says Ami Gandhi, director of voting rights and civic empowerment at the Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights, one of the organizations advocating for HB2541.

The new bill would create a civics education course designed for inmates about to be released from prison. Rivers says it'll be non-partisan, along the lines of an introductory political science text on government, and cover issues like voting registration and current affairs. “There's a myth that people who are incarcerated . . . are politically disinterested,” Rivers says. “This would be promoting civic engagement, promoting folks' reentry into society, and give them more of a sense that they have a stake.” (Aquino's bill contains a similar provision—it would require the Illinois Department of Corrections to provide a voter registration application and voting information to anyone in custody eligible to vote.)

Importantly, the course would be taught mainly by other prisoners, who will have been trained by nonpartisan civics organizations. Gandhi notes that the idea for peer education was suggested by people with a criminal record who had input in writing the bill; they argued that it would make for less “preachy” classes. “Symbolically, it says a lot—it sends the message that civic engagement does not die [in prison],” says Rivers.

“It's credibility for someone that's coming from your own walk of life,” says Blackwell.

After it was filed by Rep. Sonya Harper, the bill moved through the House by a vote of 102-9 on April 10. In early May, it was unanimously passed by the Senate's Criminal Law Committee. It now moves to the Senate floor. “I think part of the reason that there hasn't been a whole lot of objection so far . . . is that this bill doesn't ask for any new rights,” said Rivers. “We just want to help people exercise those rights when they get out.”

For his part, Blackwell hopes the program, if it comes into existence, will give people leaving prison the sense that they can meaningfully participate in the political process. “A lot of men and women come home after prison, it's kind of hard [for them] to imagine that you have any semblance of power when you're still on parole, or incarcerated. The only way you can start to help them is through the dialogue,” he says. “It's people we come in contact with that's incarcerated that may have never even left the confines of their neighborhood. We're trying to get them to understand that it's all about empowerment.”

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Daniel, Maria, Anay, and Susana Moso at El Sabor Poblano ANJALI PINTO

RESTAURANT REVIEW

Rogers Park's El Sabor Poblano smells like home

... and tastes of a single village in Puebla.

By MIKE SULA

When it was party time in San Juan Pilcaya, Maria Moso was the village's go-to for *pipián verde*.

Whenever there was cause for celebration in her hometown of 1,000 or so in south central Puebla, every woman had a job to do. Maybe it was making tamales, or rice, or the state's iconic brick-red mole poblano, but Moso was known for Puebla's other great mole—and she was expected to prepare it (meanwhile, the men butchered and buried the goats for barbacoa).

At the Rogers Park restaurant Moso opened with her daughter Anay and her grandson, Daniel, it's easy to see why. Whether it's smothering a pair of herbaceous epazote-scented *tamales de ceniza*, or sharing the plate across a chicken leg from a mole poblano, it is memorably nutty and creamy from pumpkin seeds, tart from tomatillos, grassy from cilantro and epazote, and loaded with the slow vegetal sting of jalapeño. It's a rich, olive-colored life force that's best delivered to your mouth scooped in the warm embrace of the restaurant's freshly pressed, char-stippled golden corn tortillas.

Daniel, who works the front of the house dressed like an ambassador from the campesinos, says that back home it is known that if you start cooking a mole, you have to be the one to finish it. If someone else steps in it's bound to be ruined. At this seven-month-old storefront no one else gets near Maria's mole. "She's the one with the magic touch," says Daniel. For about 20 years Maria Moso's magic touch was employed in the fast-food industry. Same with Anay. As for Daniel, he got his start running tables down the street at Andersonville's M. Henry, and then worked in the bar program at Cruz Blanca for three years, running cocktails and pouring mezcal flights, before taking a year off in Puebla to get a taste of the food he grew up on at its origins.

About two years ago, Maria, Anay, Daniel, and his stepfather Fernando started a small catering business, making quesadillas and pambazos on a *parillada*, a portable gas-powered grill. *Pambazos*, the guajillo-drenched potato-and-chorizo sandwiches, are a specialty of Mexico City (where Fernando is from). The business flourished for over a year and half. Then the family decided to open a brick-and-mortar spot focusing on the food from their home, which in 2017 achieved a bitter notoriety as the epicenter of an earthquake that took most of the town's buildings.



Picaditas, granillo drink, mole rojo ANJALI PINTO

Daniel adopts a term used in the marketing of mezcal to describe what the Moso family is doing to set themselves apart from the thousands of Mexican restaurants around town: "single village." Usually that means a spirit distilled by a single producer or family from a specific village. Here he means it's reflective of not just San Juan Pilcaya, but the towns around it that subsist crucially on corn—specifically yellow corn.

Wherever you find them in Chicago, freshly made tortillas are a treasure. Mostly they're made from white corn masa, but the Mosos believe the yellow masa they get delivered every day from Pilsen's Tortilleria Atotonilco is closest to what they ate back home. Pressed and griddled fresh off the flattop, these heavenly light circles of sunshine emit a sweet aroma that penetrates whatever gray, bewildering fog is clouding your thoughts.

This masa is ideal for recreating the *picaditas* everyone eats for breakfast before heading into the fields, accompanied by *champurrado*, that same masa in liquid form, seasoned with cinnamon, chocolate, and raw unrefined piloncillo. Otherwise known as *sopes*, picaditas are flat ovals thicker and sturdier than tortillas, with soft centers and upturned edges that are crispier and chewier, and contain reservoirs of red or green salsa, crumbled, just-melted queso fresco, and, if you choose, practically superfluous proteins. The same masa is dried and rehydrated to form the ➔

FOOD & DRINK

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quesadillas upon which the restaurant is built; stuffed with chicken tinga, mushrooms, and squash blossoms, or fresh, fluffy house-made quesosón cheese scented with epazote, which grows wild at home and is the unmistakable olfactory signature of more than a few dishes on El Sabor Poblano's focused menu.

While the picaditas are hearty and filling and just the things to sustain you through your labors, the quesadillas balloon when they're deep-fried, and perform like airy, delicately crisp empanadas, inviting you to gorge on them like you have nothing else to do all day.

Corn haunts you like a ghost in the days after you've eaten at El Sabor Poblano. The memory of the tortillas will intrude on your thoughts, whether you've swiped them through a pool of seven-chile mole poblano, or used them to rip chunks of barbacoa off the bone, the sweetly fragrant goat meat perfumed with the avocado leaves from home that it's steamed with. It also inhabits the deeply flavored consommé made from the same goat meat, thickened with rice and chickpeas.



Susana and Maria working together ANJALI PINTO

These dishes, due to their labor intensity, are available only on the weekends. Same goes for the chicken soup, colored like a red dwarf star from guajillo chiles, and redolent of the epazote announcing its presence from across the room.

In service of other unforgettable aromas, the Mosos also spend a lot of time on Fridays pulling guaje seeds out of their long and transparently thin green pods. The legumes, which are commonly used in salsas or mixed with scrambled eggs, are here crushed to thicken a

deep-green beef soup called *guasmole*, layering an already herbal-intensive brew with an aroma that approaches something like mint and lemongrass.

The Mosos open early for customers to fuel up on picaditas and champurrado, and they stay busy all day long, serving tamales, tacos dorados (aka flautas), and enchiladas with mole. The pambazos notwithstanding, the menu stays resolutely focused on the kind of things you'd eat every day (or on holidays) in San Juan Pilcaya. Things haven't slowed down since their opening day when they went through about 200 pounds of masa. And just because they now operate a restaurant, that doesn't mean they've left their catering days behind. They're booked all summer for evening parties, where people still clamor for quesadillas and pambazos, but now also expect to be served freshly made tortillas and Maria Moso's magic pipián verde, untouched by anyone else.

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FOOD & DRINK



Assyrian Kitchen Sunday brunch; *kipteh* (lamb and cracked wheat meatball) stuffed with quail egg
ISAAC JOEL TORRES | KOLORBLIND.NET

FEATURE

A little bit of this, a little bit of that

Assyrian Kitchen revives an ancient cuisine in modern Chicago.

By AMY BIZZARRI

Atorina Zomaya was raised in a close-knit Assyrian American family in Rogers Park that revolved around food. “Pretty much everything was homemade—breads, yogurt, cheeses—according to ancient family recipes,” she says.

But despite growing up surrounded by amazing home cooks—grandma, uncles, aunts—she didn’t know any of the recipes. “If you ever asked, their instructions always included ‘a little bit of this’ and ‘a little bit of

that’—nothing was exact. The only ingredients I would say were ever consistent were the love and the time they would put into preparing each and every meal.”

Curious, Zomaya set out to discover the history behind her family’s culinary traditions. She cooked alongside her elders and standardized the recipes. Then she began researching the origins of her favorite Assyrian dishes.

Her curiosity was sparked even further when she came across the world’s oldest “cookbook,” three Mesopotamian clay tablets known as ➔

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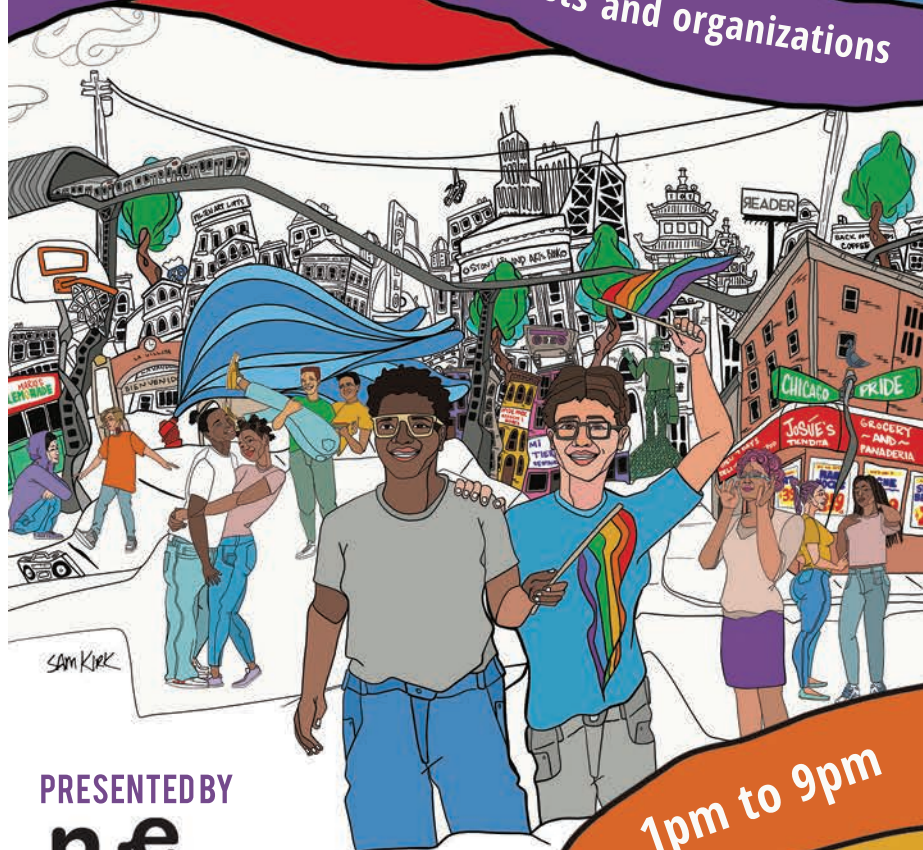
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FOOD & DRINK

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the Yale Culinary Tablets, part of the Yale Babylonian Collection at the Peabody Museum of Natural History. Dating back to 1700 BCE, the tablets feature cooking instructions written in cuneiform for more than two dozen dishes, including a recipe for a wild fowl pie and a turnip dish with mashed leeks and garlic, all served to royalty once upon a time.

"After learning more about the recipes that were recorded on these clay tablets, I realized not much has changed in modern Assyrian food culture," notes Zomaya.

Her passion quickly turned into a side project with a dream. Eager to share "the richness of the Assyrian culture through the power of food, history, and traditions that define the uniqueness of Assyrian cuisine," she launched the first Assyrian Kitchen cooking class out of a Whole Foods in Chicago seven years ago. One of the first chefs Zomaya invited to co-teach a class with her was Dan Sarkiss of Zaytune Mediterranean Grill in Bridgeport. They fell in love and got engaged last September.

In late April, Zomaya opened a permanent location at 5481 North Northwest Highway in Jefferson Park. "This will be the home for our hands-on cooking classes, artisan food shop, private events, and catering," she says.

Enclosed in lapis lazuli-colored walls and accented by vibrant Assyrian art, the space conveys ancient luxury in a minimalist, elegant way. "I love that it feels both chic and warm," says Zomaya. "Assyrian Kitchen is an experience from the moment you walk in."

With stalwart ingredients such as beef, lamb, barley, tomatoes, potatoes, eggplant, and lentils, spiced with red pepper, paprika, coriander, cinnamon, cumin, cardamom, and nutmeg, Assyrian cuisine shares many elements and cooking techniques with Middle Eastern cuisine. Vegetable and spice-rich stews are common, rice and/or flatbreads are usually served with every meal, and tea is sipped at all times of the day.

But the cuisine of the Aramaic-speaking Syriac Christians of northern Iraq, northeastern Syria, northwestern Iran, and southeastern Turkey has one key ingredient that sets it apart from the rest of the Middle East: alcohol, found in the wine, wheat beer, and anise-flavored arak, brewed and distilled since ancient times.

When asked what her favorite Assyrian dish is, Zomaya has a quick answer: "Gubibate! They're dangerous." She elaborates on her website: "Made of bulgur wheat, onions, finely ground beef, lamb, or goat meat, gubibate can



Dan Sarkiss and Atorina Zomaya © ISAAC JOEL TORRES | KOLORBLIND.NET

be fried, baked, cooked in broth, or served raw. King Ashurnasirpal II (900 BCE) was enjoying 'gubibate' way before they became popular and several regions in the Middle East have their variations of the dish. Gubibate are more commonly known as kibbeh, kubba, kbebat today."

Assyrian Kitchen has gubibate-making workshops on the schedule for the upcoming months.

In addition to cooking classes such as "Let's Pickle and Ferment," "Bread Baking 101: Assyrian Flatbread," and "Kipteh: Lamb & Cracked Wheat Meatballs," Assyrian Kitchen has a number of reservation-only brunches and dinner events in the works. Zomaya also shares a number of family recipes including *girdoo* (barley porridge), *dolma* (stuffed grape leaves), and coconut date rolls on her website.

"Assyrian Kitchen is an experience," Zomaya writes. "It's an opportunity to share the richness of an ancient culture that has a long history in Chicago with the people of Chicago. Anyone that appreciates great dishes that grace modern menus, will love Assyrian cuisine! It's the high-quality food, the genuine hospitality, the conversations shared over a meal. That's the soul of Assyrian Kitchen."

@amybizzarri

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VISUAL ART

Her body

Photographer Laura Aguilar invited viewers to take a long, hard look at all her imperfections.

By **IONIT BEHAR**

In 1996, the self-taught photographer and film artist Laura Aguilar, then in her 30s, positioned her naked body in the rocky desert landscape of southern California and took a series of self-portraits. The black-and-white series *Nature Self-Portrait* (1996) juxtaposes the land and the artist's flesh: large, brown, queer, female. It asks viewers to focus their attention on the artist's body and see the often invisible and marginal reality of someone like Aguilar. Born to a Mexican Irish mother and Mexican American father, Aguilar struggled throughout her life with the complexity of her ethnic and sexual identity, her obesity, her auditory dyslexia, and clinical depression.

Three decades of Aguilar's work are currently on display at the National Museum of Mexican Art in Pilsen, her first retrospective. This exhibition, titled “Laura Aguilar: Show and Tell,” first opened in 2017 at the Vincent Price Art Museum in Los Angeles in collaboration with the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center. Aguilar passed away in April 2018 from kidney failure shortly after the exhibition closed.

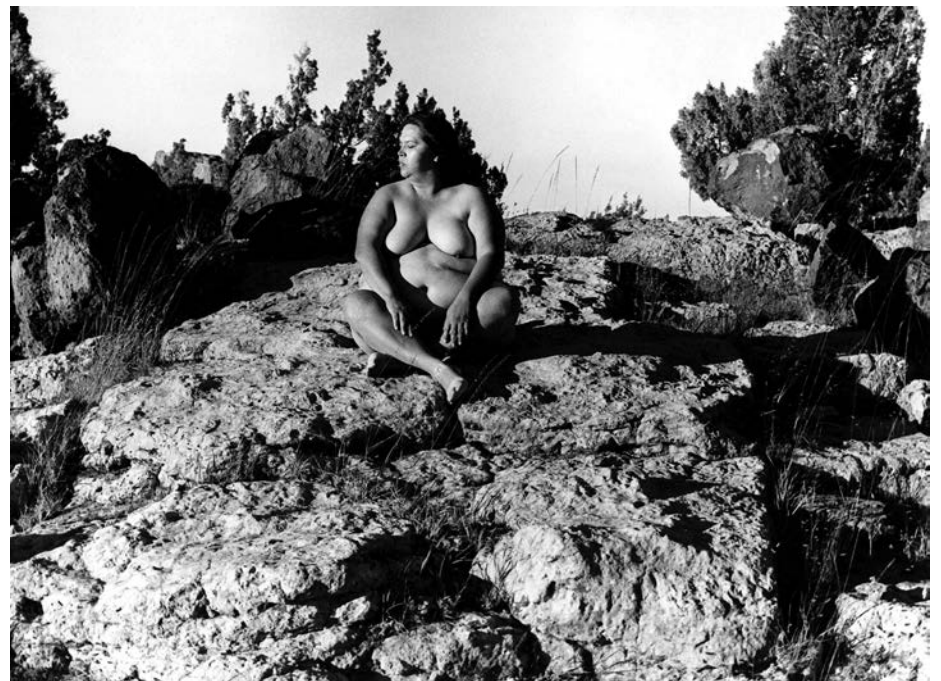
Sybil Venegas, who curated the exhibition and who mentored Aguilar when she was a student in the 1980s at East Los Angeles College, writes in the exhibition catalog that “Aguilar's work forces the viewer to confront images of Mexican American female identity, particularly images of the artist herself, that are often at odds with conventional yet stereotypical notions of women in general and Latina women in particular.” Even though Aguilar is a Chicana artist, Venegas observes, she does not use the iconography of most Chicana artists.

The exhibition is organized chronologically and includes mostly portraits of Aguilar's friends and family, members of her Chicana/

Latinx and LGBTQ communities, people of color, the obese, and, most significantly, herself. Starting from her early projects, such as the photo-and-text-based confessional series *Latina Lesbians* (1986–90) and the multipart work *How Mexican Is Mexican* (1990), Aguilar invented a format that allowed herself and others to explore complex narratives of self-identity as well as creating an opportunity for self-acceptance and cultural and political resistance.

“Aguilar's work not only appeals to the Chicana community,” says Cesáreo Moreno, chief curator of the National Museum of Mexican Art. “It speaks to anyone thinking about and dealing with complex identities.” He adds that “her photography has a very special honesty. She's not trying but rather doing. She is honest so you cannot help but engage with it as a viewer.”

In 1990, Aguilar made her first nude, *Three Eagles Flying*; it became her most celebrated work. In this photo triptych, the artist stands between the Mexican and American flags. She is seminude: the eagle of the Mexican flag covers her face, while the U.S. stars and stripes are wrapped around her lower body. Both flags are bound to her with a rope that ➔



Laura Aguilar, *Nature Self-Portrait #2*, 1996; *Nature Self-Portrait #11*, 1996

© LAURA AGUILAR AND UCLA CHICANO STUDIES RESEARCH CENTER

ARTS & CULTURE

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loops around her neck and wrists. Aguilar represents here the challenges of navigating her racial and cultural identities as Mexican, Mexican American, and American. Aguilar's mother, for example, was light-skinned and, although a fluent Spanish speaker, was frequently mistaken for a white woman, while Aguilar, who was darker-skinned, was often chastised for not speaking Spanish—a common circumstance for many third-generation Mexican Americans. This piece set the stage for her future work.

Another nude work in the exhibition that caught my attention was *Nature Self-Portrait #4* (1996). The artist reclines on her right side in front of a pool of water. Her naked body faces the camera, revealing her large breasts, stomach, and thighs and is partially reflected in the water. Her eyes are closed, but even though her pose resembles that of someone resting, we know she isn't completely relaxed because of the tense position of her left leg, which seems to be supporting her body. The way the image is cropped makes Aguilar's body seem larger and closer to the viewer, almost an invitation for us to touch her and become part of the scene with her, to see her body first and only then ask, "Who is this woman, and what is she trying to tell us?"

"I photograph the people around me—women, people of color, gays and lesbians," Aguilar told the theater artist Luis Alfaro in 1992. "I wouldn't know what to do with the perfect body. Can we get comfortable with the imperfections?"

"At the end of the 20th century," Venegas explains, "people were not ready to see a naked large brown woman because it defies the idea of the body of a beautiful woman Aguilar was an artist ahead of her time.



Laura Aguilar, *Three Eagles Flying*, 1990. © LAURA AGUILAR AND UCLA CHICANO STUDIES RESEARCH CENTER

The public was not ready to embrace it at the time. Only now she is getting the recognition and understanding she deserves." This increase in attention and respect is due, in large part, to "Show and Tell."

The exhibition also includes two short videos where Aguilar casts a critical eye upon herself. *The Body* and *Talking About Depression*, both from 1995, are confessional, extremely intimate, and honest. Aguilar talks about her emotional state, her relationship with her mother, her role as an artist, and her suicidal thoughts.

It is not a minor undertaking that the Mexican Museum of Art decided to host this exhibition. Moreno, the chief curator, says that it's important for the museum to show Aguilar's work because it aligns with the museum's mission to reflect the Mexican community. "The community is very diverse, racially, sexually, philosophically, occupationally," he explains. But Moreno also told me that there was some criticism from the community for showing nudity in the museum, especially given that many of its visitors are children on school trips and with their families. "We received several calls, even before the exhibition opened, expressing disapproval," he says. "One person called telling me that what we were doing was sinful."

When I visited the museum on a Friday morning, there were indeed several groups of students walking through the Aguilar exhibition with their teachers. Some were giggling, embarrassed by the images. Others were examining the pictures with deep concentration. The teachers guided them through the show, asking them to look at the portraits with compassion.

Laura Aguilar's work embodies this perfectly. 

THEATER

REVIEW

An American, Chicago-born

Court Theatre's adaptation of *The Adventures of Augie March* joyfully embraces every moment.

By KERRY REID



The Adventures of Augie March  MICHAEL BROSILOW

Whether Augie March turns out to be the hero of his own play, or whether that station is held by the ensemble of strong-willed eccentrics around him, David Auburn's new stage adaptation of Saul Bellow's classic *The Adventures of Augie March* hasn't quite decided. But in Charles Newell's production for Court Theatre, he's on a hugely entertaining and sometimes moving journey. What it lacks in narrative arc, it more than makes up for in heart, wit, and poetry.

Auburn had a nearly impossible task at hand in taking on Bellow's sprawling bildungsroman, the *David Copperfield* of gritty American 20th century working-class urban life. The novel comes in at over 500 pages and takes its hero from Chicago ("that somber city") to Mexico and an interlude on a lifeboat with a madman after his merchant vessel is sunk.

That's where Auburn's play begins, rather than with the novel's famous opening, "I am an American, Chicago-born," and there's an Ancient Mariner undertone to the encounter

had "an infantile preoccupation with themselves . . . [they are] men who hate and fear the moment in which they are living, men who are in flight from their time." But Bellow's Augie, while undeniably in flight from his unhappy family, finds himself surrendering to chance and adventure because of the vibrant women in his life. They are the driving animating forces for Augie, and they shine in this production.

There's Marilyn Dodds Frank's blunt Grandma Lausch, who tells young Augie, "You're too easy to tickle" (meaning that he chooses momentary pleasures over hard work). There's Aurora Real de Asua's cynical-but-wounded radical Mimi, who goes to Augie for help in obtaining an illegal abortion (oh hello, unexpectedly relevant content!). And there's Chaon Cross's Thea, the heiress who takes Augie to Mexico in order to train an eagle to catch iguanas—as if Susan Vance from *Bringing Up Baby* took peyote and dragged Cary Grant south of the border. Together, they're the real agents of change. The men (including Luigi Sottile as Simon, Augie's social-climbing brother) roar and kick, but it's the women who lead.

Newell's 13 actors (all of whom except Mulvey play multiple roles) negotiate the shifts in vernacular and locale with precision and panache. John Culbert's gloomy black-beamed set and chiaroscuro lighting provide a somber counterpoint to the story's fantastical elements, while Manual Cinema's shadow puppetry enhances them.

Gornick is half-right: Augie is a man-child in many ways. But in Auburn's imagining and Mulvey's performance, he embraces the moment in which he is living with an open heart. Newell's staging also embraces each moment with a bold and refreshingly uncynical sense of theatrical flair. 

 THE ADVENTURES OF AUGIE MARCH

Through 6/9: Wed 10:30 AM and 7:30 PM, Thu-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat-Sun 2 and 7:30 PM, Court Theatre, 5535 S. Ellis, 773-753-4472, courttheatre.org, \$50-\$74, \$37.50-\$55.50 students.

between Patrick Mulvey's Augie and John Judd's Basteshaw. But we're soon tossed back on the shores of Lake Michigan, where Augie's family struggles to find a toehold. Through three acts, three hours, and two intermissions, the play circles back to that boat and to a coda in Italy, where Augie, like Mr. Copperfield, sits with a notebook and tries to make sense of what's come before.

Critic Vivian Gornick once wrote that Bellow and his peers Norman Mailer and Philip Roth

 @kerryreid



OPENING

The odd couple

Below the Belt suffers from a too-vaguely-imagined dystopia.

Below the Belt, written by Richard Dresser and presented by Hundo4u Productions at Redtwist Theatre, follows Dobbitt (John Hundrieser) and Hanrahan (Michael Lomenick), mismatched roommates who work as “check-

ers” at a mysterious company in a far-off time and place. Confined to a compound, they desire purpose and connection in an environment that promotes conformity and constant productivity.

At first the show relies on familiar tropes to situate the pair as enemies. Dobbitt, a newcomer to the company, is eager to find his place. His inexperience frustrates Hanrahan, a volatile workaholic. The play’s first act is a series of slapstick domestic arguments, but through unexpected musings on loneliness, freedom, and the

Bloomsday

by MICHAEL COURIER

people they left behind, they realize what they might accomplish as friends.

Then there is their boss, Merkin, played by David McNulty. His desperation to earn the respect and compliance of his inferiors—a result of his own insecurities and loneliness—works against Dobbitt and Hanrahan’s growing kinship. Director Jon Dambacher and his actors do a fine job exploring the depths of each character as they progress from comedic archetypes to fleshed-out humans with complex histories and emotional wounds.

But the play’s conflict is primarily fueled by the conditions of the dismal dystopia in which the characters live. The show hints at the rules of this world, but offers few tangible details as to how it differs from our own. The lack of grounding makes it difficult to assess how much danger Dobbitt and Hanrahan are actually in at the compound and to what extent they are oppressed by the power structures of the company. As a result, the play lacks stakes, and the sense of purpose behind the characters’ struggle for freedom feels diminished.

—KATIE POWERS *BELOW THE BELT* Through 6/16: Thu-Sat 8 PM, Sun 3 PM, Redtwist Theatre, 1044 W. Bryn Mawr, 847-906-3209, hundo4u.com, \$20.

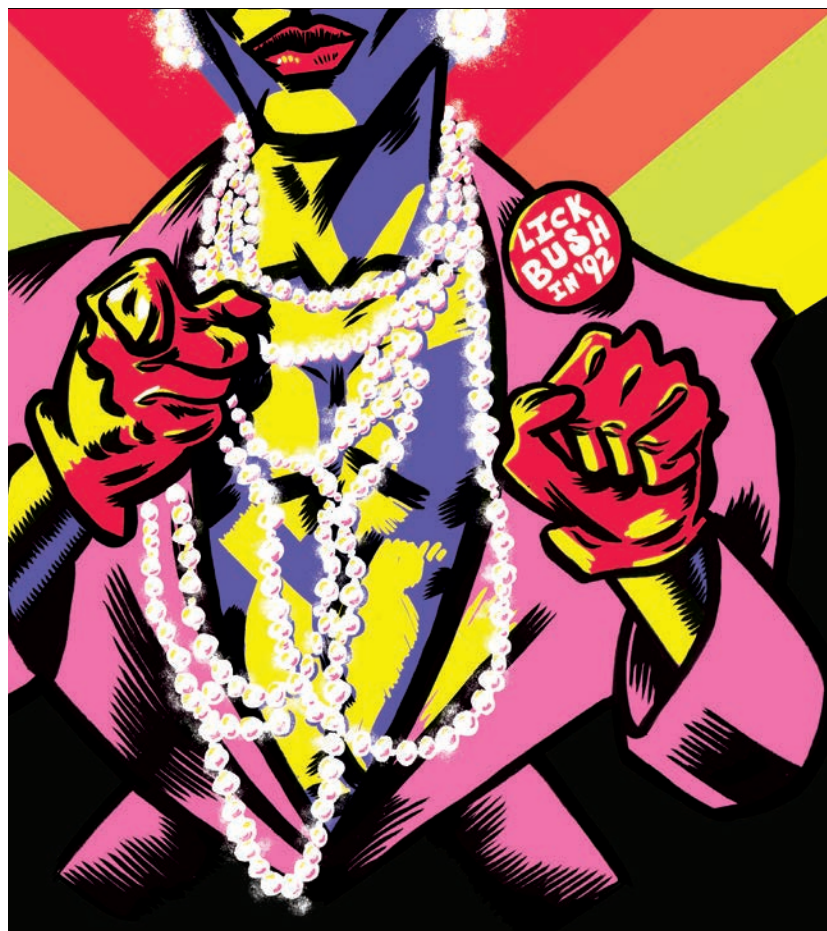
RR Always meeting ourselves
Bloomsday transcends its preposterous plot with nuanced musings on age and regret.

A stranger walks up to you. They know your name, where you’ve been, where you’re headed, what you’ll do there,

and how your life will turn out decades in the future. If you’re human, you back away slowly and get the bejesus out of there. If you’re a character in an inadequately vetted play by habitually credulity-challenged Steven Dietz, you ask the stranger for directions, or advice, or sympathy. You even reveal intimate details about your deepest insecurities within a few minutes of meeting.

To enjoy Dietz’s 2015 play—and believe it or not, there is much to enjoy in director J.R. Sullivan’s supple, contemplative staging for Remy Bumpo—you’ve got to put your intellect on hold. That’s especially true given its strained time-travel conventions, in which (take a deep breath) 55-year-old Robert returns to Dublin and meets his 20-year-old self on the very day he met 20-year-old Irish native Caitheleen, his imagined great love who got away, whose 55-year-old self has also returned in search of her and Robert’s younger selves. The generations mostly interact in real time, except when they’re inexplicably invisible to each other. James Joyce references abound.

It should be a train wreck, but somehow it’s not, so long as you ignore everything except Dietz’s nuanced musings about age, youth, regret, nostalgia, yearning, and self-recrimination. Sullivan’s exemplary cast imbues the potentially preposterous story with such warmth and candor you may find yourself taking stock of your own greatest missed opportunities and heading home with a massive lump in your throat. —JUSTIN HAYFORD *BLOOMSDAY* Through 6/22: Thu-Sat 7:30 PM, Sun 2:30 PM; also Sat 6/8 and Thu 6/13 and 6/20, ↗



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Backyard debate

The Crowd You're in With is trapped in 2007, both dramatically and politically.

A group of politically engaged Chicago north sides gets together for a casual Fourth of July barbeque in Rebecca Gilman's 2007-set slice-of-life backyard debate drama. In the tradition of most dinner parties in plays, otherwise-civilized adults devolve over glasses of sangria and bottles of Oberon into sneering and shouting jackasses in the midst of multipronged existential crises related to getting older.

In order to propel the conversation into dramatically juicy territory, Gilman unconvincingly gives everyone whiplash-inducing character turns wherein they utter truly jaw-dropping statements to one another, especially when it comes to the decision of whether or not to bear children. The fact that sixtysomething landlords Karen and Tom (Lynne Baker and Javier Carmona) have a seemingly healthy childless relationship is unconscionable to pregnant Windsong (Maggie Antonijevic) and her husband, Dan (Nick Freed), who interrogate this *super common* decision like anthropologists discovering a new species. Likewise, the landlords condescend to the younger couples about the misery of parenthood and choose the occasion of the party to pre-empt tenants Melinda and Jasper (Sara Pavlak McGuire and Martin Diaz-Valdes), who are trying to conceive despite clearly not being on the same page about reproducing from minute one.

To its credit, *The Crowd You're in With* does feel like a representative snapshot of its era, both politically and theatrically, but both worlds have matured exponentially in the past decade. Besides gender-swapping one ancillary character, Derek Bertelsen's AstonRep production doesn't make much of a case about what its arguments say about the world today. —**DAN JAKES** *THE CROWD YOU'RE IN WITH* Through 6/16: Thu-Sat 8 PM, Sun 3:30 PM, Raven Theatre, 6157 N. Clark, 773-828-9129, astonrep.com, \$25, \$15 students and seniors.

Hey! Ho! Don't go!

Four Chords and a Gun reduces the Ramones from punks to adolescent brats.

John Ross Bowie's 90-minute drama purports to be about the creation of the Ramones' album *End of the*

Century, but it's actually about a quartet of posturing man-children whose most memorable characteristics are homophobia, misogyny, and surliness.

In addition to the four Ramones (Justin Goodhand as Joey, Cyrus Lane as Johnny, Paolo Santalucia as Dee Dee, and James Smith as Marky), Bowie gives us a camped-up version of record producer Phil Spector (Ron Pederson), seen here as a pistol-packing cross between Liberace and the drill sergeant in *Full Metal Jacket*. There is no exploration whatsoever of the Ramones' groundbreaking and enduring influence on punk and rock. There is no contextual information about the culture that sparked punk's emphatic, uncompromising rebellion against the status quo. There is nothing about the very ethos of punk—a form of music fueled by rage and frustration and profound alienation.

Director Richard Ouzounian gives the audience a portrait not of the artists as young men, but of young men mired in the pettiness and petulance of perpetual adolescence. Bowie's script is also rife with casually vicious homophobia and misogyny. It's set in 1979, so the slurs are historically accurate. But Bowie does nothing to explore them, merely loading up the dialogue with the kind of unexamined hatefulness that turns the Ramones into a group of blokes you'd want nothing to do with. In *Four Chords and a Gun*, they come across as both despicable and forgettable, a lethal combination for any drama. A postshow concert makes the massive drum kit upstage center more than mere decoration, but getting through the play that precedes it is more grim march than joyous mosh. —**CATEY SULLIVAN** *FOUR CHORDS AND A GUN* Through 6/2: Wed-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 2 and 8 PM, Sun 2 and 7:30 PM, Tue 7:30 PM, Broadway Playhouse, 175 E. Chestnut, 312-337-3992, broadwayinchicago.com, \$39.95-\$69.95.

Campfire tale

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein is a bombastic retelling of the original monster novel.

"It was on a dreary night in November," intones teenage Mary Shelley, thrusting a candelabrum in the air and compelling her glib and glamorous friends, poets Percy Bysshe Shelley and Lord Byron, physician John Polidori, and stepister Claire Clairmont, to act out the ghost story roaring from her imagination. It's the gloomy summer of 1816 in a cabin by Lake Geneva. The result: *Frankenstein*; or, *The Modern Prometheus*, a dark allegory of human creativity remembered for the monster Mary made.

Done in grand Gothic style, with lightning bolts and

thunderclaps punctuating every fervid declamation on cue, Lookingglass Theatre Company's production of *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*, written and directed by David Catlin, is not subtle. Every feeling is amplified to a melodramatic pitch, and the small cast multiplies itself throughout, assuming new identities with the assistance of costumes that at times verge on puppetry. Presented in the round, the actors perch on every edge and ledge the theater offers and hang from silks, hoops, straps, and more, with a precariousness that emphasizes the chiaroscuro between heroism and foolishness, ambition and catastrophe.

There is a substantial distance between the sensitive monster of Mary Shelley's 1818 novel and the lumbering beast pictured in the movies—a gulf between the salacious escapades of the Romantic writers, living as if they had more than the average span of life to spend, and the mortal debts collected from them. *Frankenstein* attempts to straddle these contradictions in a bombastic telling that is mostly faithful to the frame and occasionally manages to penetrate beyond it. —**IRENE HSIAO** *MARY SHELLEY'S FRANKENSTEIN* Through 8/4: Wed-Thu 7:30 PM, Sat-Sun 2 and 7:30 PM, Tue 7:30 PM; also Thu 5/30, 6/6, 6/20, 7/11, and 7/25, and Wed 7/3, 2 PM; no performance Thu 7/4, Lookingglass Theatre Company, 821 N. Michigan, 312-337-0665, lookingglasstheatre.org, \$35-\$65.

Do you laugh or cry?

It Is Magic takes a sympathetic look at the world of storefront theater.

Theater Oobleck presents the world premiere of Mickie Maher's latest hilarious tragedy. In the basement of a community theater (very much like the Chopin, where this production is being staged), two middle-aged sisters who have given 20 years of their lives to the company flail while holding auditions for an adult-oriented version of *The Three Little Pigs*. Meanwhile, upstairs on the main stage, the pompous artistic director is mounting his take on *Macbeth*.

What starts as an irreverent skewering of storefront theater gains depth and resonance as the parallels between the children's tale downstairs and tragedy upstairs come into focus. Maher manages the difficult trick of simultaneously mocking these doomed wannabe thespians while making the audience completely identify with their struggle. He also slips in plenty of timely commentary on workplace power dynamics and the impossible odds against continuing to express oneself creatively in a society that values little besides commerce.

Even as the proceedings seem to take a metaphysical (or perhaps mythological) turn, Maher never slackens the tension between silly and serious and never allows his characters to stoop to cheap laughs or gratuitous dramatics. There isn't a second when there's any doubt that any of these people don't believe in what they're doing. A very earnest question is at the heart of this play, the question every artist must ask sooner or later: how and why do you go on in the face of overwhelming indifference? —**DMITRY SAMAROV** *IT IS MAGIC* Through 6/29: Fri-Sat 7:30 PM, Sun 3 PM; also Mon 6/17, 7:30 PM, Chopin Theater, 1543 W. Division, 773-278-1500, theateroobleck.com, \$20 suggested donation, more if you've got it, free if you're broke.

Cha cha, salsa, y amor

La Havana Madrid pays tribute to Chicago's 1960s Caribbean Latinx music scene.

La Havana Madrid, Sandra Delgado's award-winning immersive musical, returns to Chicago, transporting us to the vibrant Caribbean Latinx music scene of the 1960s. Filled with intimate vignettes of Cuban-, Colombian-, and Puerto Rican-American life, it paints a picture of young immigrants acclimating to life in a segregated city while searching for love and connection. It is a celebration of the power of music to unite people and to instill a feeling of belonging. "Music means home," as one character says, and the club becomes a place where all are welcome, where one can reignite a feeling of love.

La Havana Madrid embodies the spirit of the legendary Chicago nightclub, at times inviting enthusiastic audience members to dance. Delgado sings, while the renowned musician Roberto "Carpacho" Marin and his band provide butt-shaking musical accompaniment. The extraordinary cast explodes with vitality, wonderful dancing, and heartfelt singing, while traversing the challenges of a civil rights-era Chicago. Decaying neighborhoods, police shooting unarmed youth in Humboldt Park, and gentrification pushing out people of color ring all too familiar.

Music, dance, and humor embolden the newcomers to find their tenuous place in this foreign land while still reveling in their cultural history. Henry (Tommy Rivera-Vega) and Maruja (Alix Rhode), both with outstanding solo songs, are based on Delgado's parents who got married long-distance while he was in Chicago and she in Medellín, Colombia. An homage to Latinx and American history, *La Havana Madrid* is a delightful night of cha cha, salsa, and love. —**JOSH FLANDERS** *LA HAVANA MADRID* Through 6/22: Thu-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 3 and 7:30 PM, Sun 3 PM; also Wed 6/19, 7:30 PM, Den Theatre, 1331 N. Milwaukee, 773-697-3830, teatrovista.org, \$35-\$60.

We waited 108 years for this?

Miracle is the theatrical equivalent of a no-stakes late-season game.

If you love the Cubs and don't see many musicals, then *Miracle* is the show for you. Like watching a mediocre baseball game, it's predictable and uninspiring with long stretches of little action interspersed with occasional cheers. Containing every possible baseball metaphor, it covers all the bases without ever hitting a home run. The opening Cubbie Bear blues number with wonderful video screens makes one hope for so much more.

Instead the predictable story by Jason Brett, with music and lyrics by Michael Mahler, follows the blue-collar Delaney family who own a Wrigleyville bar that's in danger of closing as the 2016 season begins. Charlie, a former pitcher turned pourer, sings "I'm out," ready to give up rooting for losers. Sofia, a teacher, is about to lose her job. Charlie's dad, Pops, mourns his late wife, and daughter Dani still believes in miracles. The fantasy isn't the Cubs winning but (unsurprising spoiler) a family bar surviving the transformation of Wrigleyville.

The cast is outstanding, despite the material. Pops (Gene Weygandt) has a fabulous voice and some beautiful moments. Charlie's best bud Larry (Jonathan Butler-Duplessis) delivers a couple great songs, and young Elise Wolf (who shares the role with Amaris Sanchez) shines as Dani. But Brandon Dahlquist and Allison Sill as Charlie and Sofia have the chemistry of siblings and their songs, with lyrics like "we make a damn good team" or "what's the pitch," are cringeworthy. In the end, Chicago won, but Wrigleyville lost, and less than a week later, after the election, so did the rest of the country. But holy cow, we broke the curse! —**JOSH FLANDERS** *MIRACLE: A MUSICAL 108 YEARS IN THE MAKING*

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RR Feeling electric
More than a decade after its premiere, *Next to Normal* is still brilliantly weird.

This award-winning 2008 musical by Brian Yorkey (book and lyrics) and Tom Kitt (music) began its life as a 10-minute rock musical, *Feeling Electric*, that was inspired by a *Dateline NBC* story about electroconvulsive therapy. (One of the most moving parts of the show remains the dramatization through music and dance of how it feels to experience ECT.) Despite all the Drama Desk Awards, Tonys, and the Pulitzer, the show has not transcended its roots as a kinda cool, kinda experimental rock musical based on a kinda weird premise: getting in the head of someone struggling with bipolar disorder who eventually receives ECT.

If you are a person fascinated with psychology or with unconventional storytelling, this is your show. Yorkey's script and lyrics brilliantly portray the protagonist's mental state. Kitt's rock score is also a revelation. But the very qualities that make *Next to Normal* outstanding also make it a challenge for those who go to the theater to be reassured that no matter how painful and chaotic the world gets, people heal, things turn out okay, and a

new order of some kind prevails in the end. This is not that kind of show. There is no happy ending. There is no ending at all, actually, but to say more would be to say too much.

The Writers Theatre revival, directed by New York-based David Cromer (returning to one of the theaters where he cut his teeth in his youth), is flawless. The casting is, to an actor, on point. Keely Vasquez, in particular, is terrific as the show's troubled protagonist; she knows just how to win our sympathy without inspiring pity. —**JACK HELBIG** *NEXT TO NORMAL* Through 6/16: Wed-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 3 and 7:30 PM, Sun 2 and 6 PM, Tue 7:30 PM; also Wed 5/29 and 6/12, 3 PM; no performances Sun 6/2 and 6/16, 6 PM, *Writers Theatre*, 325 Tudor Ct., Glencoe, 847-242-6000, writerstheatre.org, \$60-\$80

Half-assed and brotastic
Storefront Theater Musical is a bad-faith disaster.

Remember *High School Musical*? Cool, cool, here's what would happen if someone fused the squickest parts of it onto a satire of Chicago theater. In the Cornservatory's *Storefront Theater Musical*, originally produced in 2009, three different storefront companies all hold space at the imaginary Upstage Theater. There's an improv troupe, a drag company, and the woo-woo Really Realistic Realism Theater. Big personalities abound, all of them self-absorbed, all of them toothless parodies of the folks who comprise the city's storefront theater

scene. This community is certainly fertile ground for lampooning, but the characters are written and performed with zero tenderness or sincerity. Sexual harassment is a punchline. The queer characters serve as jesters. Sometimes you can catch the lyrics. The end result is juvenile bullying.

Full disclosure: I reclaimed my time and left at intermission. I couldn't do it. Between the dick jokes, a truly tone-deaf number about the trial in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and careless sound production, this revival is a bad-faith disaster.

And, it's infuriating. Knowing the sacrifices that theater artists make to produce their work, I found this a half-assed, brotastic spin on artmaking that lacked the intelligence and self-awareness to land. You don't get to make fun of the hardest working folks in town without putting in the hard work yourself. —**KT HAWBAKER** *STOREFRONT THEATER MUSICAL* Through 6/29: Thu-Sat 8 PM; Fri 6/14, 7 PM, *Cornservatory*, 4210 N. Lincoln, cornservatory.org, \$12-\$20.

The Winter's Tale of our discontent
But at least "Exit, pursued by a bear" finally makes sense.

Now still being the winter of our discontent, it feels unwarranted for the Goodman Theatre to run its air conditioner on high, as if we could forget for a moment the urban tundra that encircles its new production of *The Winter's Tale*, directed by Robert Falls. But a chilly

excess characterizes this rendition of Shakespeare's romance about the destructive jealousy of Sicilian king Leontes (played with muttering intensity by Dan Donohue) and his Job-like redemption, with a comic interlude of song and so forth in the pastoral land of Bohemia.

Though graced with some excellent actors—in addition to Donohue, Kate Fry is a winsome, then woebe-gone, then wonderful Hermione, and Christiana Clark an impressively forceful Paulina—the absence of effort to reconcile the incoherence of the plot makes this production primarily a spectacle. Layers of glass serve as the kingdom of Sicilia, throwing reflections like a ghostly hall of mirrors. Bohemia has sheep as large as Trojan horses, a warbling thief, and shepherds who line dance. Hundreds of red scraps of paper clutter the stage. It sort of makes you wish you were watching the play outdoors, unamplified, with a picnic in summer.

One choice that succeeds is the interpretation of one of Shakespeare's most memorable stage directions: "Exit, pursued by a bear." Dressing Leontes' son Mamil-lus (Charlie Herman) in a bear suit as he plays in Act I serves as a vivid foil to the beast that eviscerates the servant Antigonus at the end of Act III, allowing the image to serve as the otherwise-absent pivot between comedy and tragedy. —**IRENE HSIAO** *THE WINTER'S TALE* Through 6/9: Wed 7:30 PM, Thu 2 and 7:30 PM, Fri 8 PM, Sat 2 and 8 PM, Sun 2 and 7:30 PM, Tue 7:30 PM; no performance Thu 6/6, 2 PM, or Sun 6/9, 7:30 PM, *Goodman Theatre*, 170 N. Dearborn, 312-443-3800, goodmantheatre.org, \$25-\$75. 



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REVIEW

Seen and unseen

Non-Fiction and *The Souvenir* question how well their characters really know one another—and themselves.

By **BEN SACHS**

At first glance, *Non-Fiction* (which opens this weekend at the Music Box) might appear to be a minor effort from French writer-director Olivier Assayas. The film is dialogue-driven, as opposed to advancing a remarkable visual aesthetic, and the conversations seem to spell out the ideas Assayas wants to communicate. Practically every scene contains some exchange about the nature of mass media in the 21st century, and while these exchanges are eloquent, even provocative, some viewers might find them a little too clear-cut. Assayas's characters explicitly debate the merits of reading e-books versus traditional print, binge-watching TV shows versus going to the movies, and learning about writers via autobiographical fiction versus news reports of their personal behavior. It's as though Assayas—who's explored these themes before in such films as *Late August, Early September* (1998), *Demonlover* (2002), and *Clouds of Sils Maria* (2014)—simply wanted to give expression to his conflicted feelings on postmodern life, storytelling be damned.

Yet Assayas, one of the most important and inventive living filmmakers, has more on his mind than just a *My Dinner With Andre*-style

talkfest. *Non-Fiction* is not only about the subjects it declares itself to be about; it's a subtle meditation on what it means to navigate them in a world where the line between public and private self seems increasingly blurred. The principal characters are all duplicitous in some way, and Assayas suggests that their duplicity is simply normal behavior in a society that encourages people to create complex public personas that draw on their private identities without revealing too many ugly truths. The character of Léonard Spiegel (Vincent Macaigne) embodies the society to a T. He writes novels that are thinly veiled accounts of his private life, though he insists that his work is fiction, not autobiography. His blithe refusal to discuss his personal life (as opposed to his writing) gets him into hot water not only with the people he writes about, but with readers and interviewers who think they know the truth about him. Despite the thoroughness of Assayas's dialogue, the characters hardly debate Léonard's evasive moral position, which is a testament to the subtlety of *Non-Fiction*. Assayas leaves it up to the audience to debate the film's most challenging provocation.

Léonard is cheating on his wife, a political advisor named Valérie (Nora Hamzawi), with

The Souvenir AGATHA A. NITECKA

Selena (Juliette Binoche), the actress wife of his editor, Alain (Guillaume Canet). Alain, in turn, is cheating on Selena with his coworker Laure (Christa Thérét). None of the characters feel particularly guilty about being unfaithful, which shows how easily they can separate their public and private selves. (It's worth noting that the film's original French title, *Double Vies*, translates to "double lives.") Yet for all the characters' self-consciousness—about their actions, their politics, and their position within the zeitgeist—they don't seem particularly self-aware. That is, they don't realize the extent to which they reflect attitudes in the culture they claim not to like. This willed blindness is fairly pathetic, but it also makes one care deeply for the characters. Watching *Non-Fiction*, you root actively for them to use their smarts to see beyond themselves, to accept some sense of responsibility for what they do. Whether the characters evolve remains ambiguous up until the end of the film, another sign of Assayas's compelling caginess.

Joanna Hogg's autobiographical drama *The Souvenir* (which opens this weekend at Century Centre) is cagey in another way that I oughtn't discuss too directly here. The film contains one of the most shocking revelations in recent movies; about halfway through, Hogg exposes something about the principal characters that forces you to reevaluate nearly everything she's shown you about them up until then. It's an effective strategy that's so much more than a narrative trick. The rev-

elation doesn't alter the film's main themes (innocence, coming of age, emotional dependency), but rather deepens them and takes them in a darker direction. It also dovetails beautifully with Hogg's visual aesthetic, which is built around an exquisite sense of off-screen space. The British writer-director has long cited French filmmaker Robert Bresson as a major influence, and like him, she knows how to play on her viewers' imaginations through the careful selection of what she does and doesn't present. The influence came through most powerfully in her first two theatrical features, *Unrelated* (2007) and *Archipelago* (2010), in which she had climactic arguments take place off camera while the on-screen action consisted of other characters reacting to them. In *The Souvenir*, she structures the whole drama in such a fashion, keeping the film's most important conflict unseen until she can no longer avoid it.

The film takes place in London in the early 1980s. Julie (Honor Swinton Byrne, the daughter of actress Tilda Swinton, who also appears here) is a film school student in her early 20s working on a social-realist drama for her final project. As in her 2013 feature *Exhibition*, Hogg realizes the art world in knowing detail, though it essentially exists as the backdrop for an interpersonal story about Julie's romance with an older man named Anthony (Tom Burke) who works for the Foreign Office. Anthony is fussy, disdainful, and priggish, but he's also witty and knows a lot about art (the movie takes its title from a Fragonard painting he takes her to admire at a museum);

Non-Fiction





some of the more important conversations Hogg dramatizes concern the properties of cinema and other artistic media. Julie quickly becomes in thrall to Anthony, not just drinking in his assessments of art, but following him to every social event he wishes to attend. The affair appears somewhat one-sided, with Julie seeming Anthony's protégé as much as his lover. An ever-understated dramatist, Hogg doesn't make this aspect of the relationship the film's focal point; she makes clear how Julie's curiosity and determination as a budding filmmaker carries over to her private life. Still, something eerie floats just beneath the surface of *The Souvenir*, hinting at the grand revelation to come.

In all her films, Hogg has demonstrated herself to be a keen observer of the unspoken bonds that tie people together. The bonds in *The Souvenir* are harder to suss out than in her previous work, forcing viewers to study subtle behavioral clues for hints as to what keeps Julie and Anthony involved with each other. Hogg guides one's attention not only through what she chooses to present, but through her manipulation of what appears in the frame. This is the first theatrical feature that Hogg has shot on celluloid, and she makes brilliant use of shallow focus to keep you keyed in to specific details. Generally avoiding wide shots, Hogg renders the central relationship as something of a prison—only in the movie's devastating second half do you come to understand what the bars are made of. **R**

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Booksmart

NOW PLAYING

N Apollo 11

Edited like a thriller—complete with music that practically bites your nails for you—this documentary about the Apollo 11 spaceflight is more potent as a record of American naiveté than as an enlightening spectacle. Culling from archival footage shot on 16 mm, 35 mm, and even 65 mm (some of it never before seen), director Todd Douglas Miller takes a direct-cinema approach, relying only on audio clips from the past to annotate the historic occasion. The film's initial uncanniness, a result of seeing nearly 50-year-old footage presented with little context, is quickly sacrificed for a rote documentary structure, complete with informational diagrams. Furthermore, the problematic realities of the era—including the conspicuous lack of women or people of color involved in the process, among other issues—distract from one's sense of marvel. As a testament to the wonders of science and space, it's extraordinary; as a testament to the triumph of cinema and mankind, it's more a small step than a giant leap. —**KATHLEEN SACHS** *G*, 93 min. *Fri 5/24, 4:15 and 8:15 PM; Sat 5/25, 5 PM; Sun 5/26, 2 and 6:15 PM; Mon 5/27, 5:15 PM; Tue 5/28, 6 PM; Wed 5/29, 8:15 PM; and Thu 5/30, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center*

RR Ash Is Purest White

About two-thirds of the way into *Ash Is Purest White*, the latest triumph by Chinese master Jia Zhang-ke, the heroine, Qiao (Zhao Tao, Jia's regular leading lady), meets a strange man on a train heading north from the central province of Hubei. Qiao was recently released from prison after serving a five-year term; after tracking down her boyfriend, who didn't bother to meet her upon her release, she discovered that he had taken up with another woman while Qiao was in jail. Qiao intends to return to her hometown of Datong, though she's not sure what she'll do there. Feeling rudderless, she listens to the strange man with rapt attention, as if

looking for a sign for what to do with her life. He says he's headed to an area near the border with Inner Mongolia, where he plans to set up a tourism company that will take people to places where others have claimed to see UFOs. Qiao lies and claims that she's seen a flying saucer herself, perhaps to earn the stranger's trust. He concludes the spiel about his prospective business by saying, "The bottom line is, we're all prisoners of the universe." —**BEN SACHS** *136 min. At Gene Siskel Film Center: Thu 5/23, 6 PM. At Doc Films: Sat 5/25, 7:30 PM and Sun 5/26, 4 PM.*

N Be Natural: The Untold Story of Alice Guy-Blaché

In case you were interested in hearing *Green Book* director Peter Farrelly's thoughts on Alice Guy-Blaché—the first-ever female filmmaker, thought to be the only woman making films between 1896 and 1906—then this documentary is for you. That's not to say the director, Pamela B. Green, a seemingly well-connected producer and film title and motion graphics designer, doesn't take the subject matter seriously; it's well-researched and contains many interesting tidbits about Guy-Blaché's life and career, including a rather illuminating connection to Soviet director Sergei Eisenstein, who, it's discovered, was likely inspired by one of her films. Also engaging is footage from interviews with Guy-Blaché later in her life: the film is at its best when she's speaking for herself. It's the awkward editing, superfluous celebrity interviews,

and an emphasis on the search for inconsequential facts that obscure what should be its focus—Guy-Blaché's formidable talent. —**KATHLEEN SACHS** *103 min. Fri 5/24, 2 PM; Sat 5/25, 4:30 PM; Sun 5/26, 6 PM; and Tue 5/28, 7:45 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center*

RR N Booksmart

Move over, *Superbad*: There's a new teen-buddy comedy in town. The directorial debut of actress Olivia Wilde positions two girls in the lead roles (Kaitlyn Dever and Beanie Feldstein, whose older brother Jonah Hill starred in *Superbad*) and allows them to be what most of their gross-out predecessors would not: firmly feminist and funny. They are best friends who worked hard to get into Ivy League universities, only to discover on their last day of high school that many of their classmates did, too, but without spending their weekends in the library. The majority of the narrative unfolds on the eve of high school graduation with the besties hurtling between parties to make up for lost time and bumping against realizations about themselves and their long-held friendship. Wilde is a natural behind the camera, knowing when to tip a scene into surrealism or go straight for the gut. She also surrounds herself with a first-rate if little-known team: cinematographer Jason McCormick, whose glowing close-ups and knack for slow motion render this movie more resplendent than most comedies, and a quartet of female screenwriters who nail the repartee that bright young women with raging hormones would share. Adults played by **R**

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FILM

➔ Jessica Williams, Jason Sudeikis, and Lisa Kudrow top off a diverse and memorable cast. —**LEAH PICKETT R, 105 min. Block 37, Century 12 and CineArts 6, Lake Theatre, River East 21, Showplace ICON, Webster Place,**

RR Brightness (Yeelen)

Souleymane Cisse's extraordinarily beautiful and mesmerizing fantasy (1987) is set in the ancient Bambara culture of Mali (formerly French Sudan) long before it was invaded by Morocco in the 16th century. A young man (Issiaka Kane) sets out to discover the mysteries of nature (or *komo*, the science of the gods) with the help of his mother and uncle, but his jealous father contrives to prevent him from deciphering the elements of the Bambara sacred rites and tries to kill him. Apart from creating a dense and exciting universe that should make George Lucas green with envy, Cisse has shot breathtaking images and accompanies his story with a spare, hypnotic, percussive score. Sublimely mixing the matter-of-fact with the uncanny, this wondrous work provides an ideal introduction to a filmmaker who is, next to Ousmane Sembene, probably Africa's greatest director. In French and Bambara with subtitles. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM 105 min. 35 mm. Wed 5/29, 7 PM. Northwestern University Block Museum of Art FREE**

But I'm a Cheerleader

High school cheerleader Megan (Natasha Lyonne) comes home one day to find family and friends gathered in the living room. They talk her into going to a rehabilitation camp for homosexuals that's no more surreal than her suburban community—the absurdist environment, with its rigorously defined gender roles, tweaks reality enough to show how little exaggeration the satire requires. As a ditz who's just smart enough to know something isn't right, Lyonne blends hyperbole and sincerity in perfect proportions. Jamie Babbit directed a screenplay by Brian Wayne Peterson; with Clea DuVall, Cathy Moriarty, and RuPaul Charles. —**LISA ALSPECTOR R, 85 min. 35 mm archival print. UCLA Film & Television Archive programmer KJ Reith attends the screenings. Fri 5/24-Sat 5/25, midnight. Music Box**

Climax

After making several movies that resembled bad acid trips (*I Stand Alone, Irreversible, Enter the Void*), Gaspar Noé has made a movie about people experiencing

a bad acid trip; the results may be described as thematic overkill. This takes place in the mid-1990s at a shuttered woodland boarding school where a couple dozen dancers (a mix of straight, gay, and bisexual men and women) rehearse their latest routine. One night someone spikes the dancers' sangria with LSD, and the group devolves into madness and violence. As usual Noé sets an ambience of sensory overload with strobe effects, dizzying Steadicam shots (some of them lasting more than ten minutes), and a near-constant thumping on the soundtrack. Yet it all feels emptily show-offy and monotonously shrill this time around—maybe it's because, in juggling so many characters, Noé isn't able to humanize the drug's disconcerting effects by tying them to any one person's experience. Regardless, the various attempts at shock value (with scenes involving self-mutilation and abortion) seem downright desperate. In English and subtitled French. —**BEN SACHS R, 95 min. Fri 5/24-Sat 5/25, midnight. Music Box**

RR Company Limited

The second film (1971) of Satyajit Ray's "Calcutta Trilogy" doesn't feel as urgent as the first, *The Adversary* (1970), but it's still a stinging portrait of West Bengal's upper middle class. It centers on the high-level manager of an international fan company (Barun Chanda), considering both his domestic and professional life. Ray presents the character as a self-serving hypocrite who has no qualms about overlooking others' needs in order to advance his social standing, though in characteristically humanistic fashion, the director also shows him to be capable of sensitivity and self-reflection. The antihero begins to question his moral priorities when he receives a visit from his purehearted sister-in-law (Ray regular Sharmila Tagore); Ray hints at the possibility that he might learn from the woman's example and change his ways. He doesn't, but Ray illustrates the character's failing is not simply his own but also a reflection of his class. Ray's editing here is consistently surprising, even Godardian; the film succeeds smashingly on a formal level as well as a sociological one. In English and subtitled Bengali. —**BEN SACHS 110 min. 35mm archival print. Wed 5/29, 7 and 9:30 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films**

Gimme Shelter

This grim 1970 film by David and Albert Maysles documents the Rolling Stones concert in Altamont, Cali-



Company Limited

fornia, where one spectator was stabbed to death by the Hell's Angels. It's been widely applauded as a more truthful look at the counterculture than *Woodstock* offered earlier that year, but *Woodstock* is a great film and *Gimme Shelter*, despite some fine Stones footage, is crippled by its rhetorical pretensions. As Dave Kehr wrote in his original *Reader* capsule, "The film is a strong example of the cinema verite style at work, yet few films of the school show up the crisis of its 'non-involvement' policy more tellingly. There is a horrible sense of helplessness as the Maysleses' camera looks on while the Hell's Angels stab an unruly fan to death, and the implications of hippie fascism contained in that image are not meaningfully developed in light of the film's own excessive idolization of Jagger and company. The camera that looks up too easily looks down." —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM R, 91 min. Thu 5/30, 9:30 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films**

RR Her Smell

There have been plenty of movies about self-destructive rock musicians, but none quite like this. Writer-director Alex Ross Perry isn't that interested in the creative process or the workings of the music industry—his film is a study in power dynamics at the microlevel, scrutinizing the ways that a drug-addicted bandleader (Elisabeth Moss in a commanding performance) manipulates the people closest to her and strategically avoids reckoning with her own bad behavior. This features Perry's best, most distinctive dialogue to date: rich in wordplay, proclamations, and metered speech, it suggests the influence of nothing less than Shakespearean drama. Remarkably this doesn't come off as mannered, since Perry grounds the action in an acute feeling for living in the present moment. Sean Price Williams's camera is frequently in motion, and conflicts are always bubbling up at the periphery of the frame. Audaciously structured, the film runs 135 minutes and consists of just five scenes, with each one depicting a different stage of the heroine's downfall and eventual rebirth. Perry uses extended duration to make viewers feel trapped with the characters and long for them to see beyond themselves. With Agyness Deyn, Dan Stevens, Cara Delevingne, and Eric Stoltz. —**BEN SACHS R, 134 min. Facets Cinematheque**

RR It's a Wonderful Life

The film Frank Capra was born to make. This 1946 release marked his return to features after four

years of turning out propaganda films for the government, and Capra poured his heart and soul into it. James Stewart stars as a small-town nobody, on the brink of suicide, who believes his life is worthless. Guardian angel Henry Travers shows him how wrong he is by letting Stewart see what would have happened had he never been born. Wonderfully drawn and acted by a superb cast (Donna Reed, Beulah Bondi, Thomas Mitchell, Lionel Barrymore, Gloria Grahame) and told with a sense of image and metaphor (the use of water is especially elegant) that appears in no other Capra film. The epiphany of movie sentiment and a transcendent experience. —**DAVE KEHR 129 min. 35 mm. Tue 5/28, 7 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films**

Labyrinth

When her little brother is kidnapped by goblins, a young girl must enter a mysterious labyrinth, populated by good and evil beings, to rescue him. George Lucas produced and Jim Henson (of Muppets fame) directed this heftily budgeted 1986 fantasy, which seems to be a conscious attempt to play on the female coming-of-age themes of classic fairy tales. Jennifer Connelly, David Bowie, and Toby Froud head the human cast. —**DAVE KEHR PG, 111 min. Fri 5/24-Mon 5/27, 11 PM. Logan**

Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence

Lurid sadism blends with equally lurid lyricism in this first English-language film (1983) by leading Japanese director Nagisa Oshima (*The Ceremony, In the Realm of the Senses*). The setting is a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp, where four main characters—a conciliatory British officer (Tom Conti), a brutal peasant guard (Takeshi), a beautiful, guilt-riddled English commando (David Bowie), and the equally beautiful Japanese commandant (Ryuichi Sakamoto)—work out different responses to the savage conditions around them. The elliptical narrative centers on the unspoken erotic attraction between Sakamoto and Bowie, and Oshima appears to be treating ideas of elegantly transmogrified, purified emotions, yet the context and frequent incontinence of the execution bring the film uncomfortably close to the pseudophilosophical bondage fantasies of Yukio Mishima. In English and subtitled Japanese. —**DAVE KEHR R, 123 min. 35 mm. Tue 5/28, 7 PM. Music Box**

Mickey One

This 1965 film is so obscure that contemporary critics dismissed it as a colossal bit of self-indulgence by

My Father and My Son



FILM



Brightburn

director Arthur Penn and star Warren Beatty. Scripted by Alan Srgal, it's a variation on Kafka's *The Trial*, with Beatty as a second-rate nightclub comic on the run from a nameless threat (which may or may not involve the syndicate and some gambling debts). Quintessential Penn, far easier to read now than it was then, and even funny in spots. —**DON DRUKER** 93 min. 35 mm. Showing with *Edward Bland's 1959 documentary The Cry of Jazz* (34 min, 35 mm restored print). Mon 5/27, 7 PM. Music Box

RR Mountains May Depart

The real departure here is for Jia Zhang-ke, whose earlier films (*The World, Still Life*, *24 City*, *A Touch of Sin*) have considered the pressures of globalization in a changing China but whose 2015 drama pushes both across the world and into the future. The story is positively ancient—a local beauty (Tao Zhao) must choose between a poor suitor (Jing Dong Liang) and a rich one (Yi Zhang)—but Jia radicalizes it by dividing the narrative into three sections that begin in 1999 (on the eve of the new millennium), in 2014, and finally in 2025, when the woman and her wealthy husband have split up and their college-age son (Zijian Dong) visits his exiled father in Australia. Through it all, Jia tracks the characters' disintegrating connections to each other, to China, and to the past, as the century accelerates into white noise. In English and subtitled Mandarin and Cantonese. —**J.R. JONES** 126 min. Thu 5/30, 7 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films

N My Father and My Son

In the U.S., most foreign language films are still considered art-house fare, possibly because when overseas titles first made significant box office inroads here in the 1960s, their frank content was part of their draw: they offered a lot more nudity and sex than Hollywood product and were also more likely to aim higher intellectually. But times change, and no longer is every foreign movie Art, especially when the filmmaker is targeting the widest possible audience. This 2005 melodrama from writer-director Çagan Irmak remains one of Turkey's top-grossing hits: blatantly manipulative, broadly

acted, and with a score that's about as subtle as a pit bull. It sets its hero, a widowed left-wing journalist from Istanbul (Fikret Kuskan), against his conservative father (Çetin Tekindor), a gruff salt-of-the-earth type who wanted his son to take over the family farm. In the middle, tugging at their and everyone else's heartstrings, is the reporter's superhero-obsessed 10-year-old son (Ege Tanman), a stereotypical movie kid in a film packed with clichés. In Turkish with subtitles. —**ANDREA GRONYALL** 108 min. Sat 5/25, 7:45 PM and Tue 5/28, 8 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

RR Princess Cyd

Writer-director Stephen Cone (*The Wise Kids*) ventures into Eric Rohmer territory with this philosophical, dialogue-driven comedy about a bright 17-year-old girl (Jessie Pinnick) spending the summer in Chicago with her novelist aunt (Rebecca Spence). The girl is in the process of discovering herself both intellectually and sexually, and her development sparks the curiosity of the solitary older woman. Their relationship evolves over the course of leisurely conversations about the nature of fulfillment, which lead both women to question whether they're happy (as in Rohmer's films, the characters use philosophy to mask discussion of their feelings). With great delicacy, Cone metes out details about his subjects through refined dialogue and everyday behavior; this is the sort of movie that makes you feel you've befriended the characters. —**BEN SACHS** 2017 97 min. Wed 5/29, 6:30 PM. Chicago Cultural Center **FREE**

N Ramen Shop

Food and family are the heart of this 2018 Singaporean-Japanese-French film by Eric Khoo. In a small Japanese town, a young man (Takumi Saitô) arrives to begin his shift at the family-owned ramen shop only to find his emotionally distant father dead on the floor. This sudden loss sets off a chain of events, spurred further by the discovery of several diaries left behind by his long-dead Singaporean mother, which causes our hero to drop everything and travel to Singapore in search of his maternal family with the help of a local food blogger

(played by 1980s J-pop idol Seiko Matsuda). Saccharine at times in its handling of familial conflict, the film initiates but ultimately glances off serious engagement with tough topics, namely the Japanese occupation of Singapore. Outside of the plot, Khoo's direction shines in its painstaking attention to the movie's true subject: food. Ambient sound peters out in favor of the hiss of oil and puddling of broth; light glistens off gelatinous chicken; vibrant color saturates shots of crab tossed in chilis. Each moment is an ode to Singaporean and Japanese cuisine sure to leave an audience salivating. In English, Mandarin, and Japanese with subtitles. —**NINA LI COOMES** 90 min. Fri 5/24, 6:15 PM; Sat 5/25, 6:30 PM; Sun 5/26, 2:15 and 8 PM; Mon 5/27, 5 PM; Tue 5/28, 6 PM; Wed 5/29, 8 PM; and Thu 5/30, 8 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

The Sower

A bittersweet story of first love, lost love, and sexual scheming, Marine Francen's debut feature *The Sower* (*Le Semeur*) is set in a French village filled only with women and children after all men are forced out following the republican uprising of 1851. With no idea of when—or if—their male counterparts will ever return, the women vow that if a man should stumble upon their pretty-as-a-picture mountainside community, he will become their shared husband. Naturally, this cannot end well. Soon after this promise is made, a rugged and handsome stranger (Alban Lenoir) with a mysterious past arrives, as if spoken into existence. At times the pacing runs slow and there's never quite enough tension, but the film is carried by the doe-eyed Pauline Burlet as Violette, a young woman who finds herself torn between her duty to her community and her duty to her heart. If viewers can muster up the patience to stick it out, they'll walk away feeling more than satisfied—and maybe even a little heartbroken. In French with subtitles. —**NOËLLE D. LILLEY** 98 min. Fri 5/24, 4 and 8 PM; Sat 5/25, 2:30 and 8:15 PM; Sun 5/26, 4 PM; Mon 5/27, 3 PM; Wed 5/29, 6 PM; and Thu 5/30, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

N The Sun Is Also a Star

In director Ry Russo-Young's 2019 adaptation of Nicola Yoon's novel, two teens race against the clock of civil

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Aladdin

► injustice to discover if true love is just a figment of a poet's imagination while exploring the eclectic crevices of New York City. The film tells the story of a girl (Yara Shahidi) who is using every resource in the book to save her family from deportation. In the process, she meets a boy (Charles Melton) who is hoping to fulfill his parents' wishes as a first-generation Ivy League student and future doctor. At its best, this film breathes life into the "laughing not to cry" moments that come along with being a young man or woman of color in a world not built to embrace cultural differences. At other times, it fulfills the gooeyness one expects from a romantic comedy that has its main characters' best intentions in mind. The pacing can be quick, but overall this film will warm the heart of any hopeless romantic. —**ATAVIA REED** *PG-13, Century 12 and CineArts 6, Showplace ICON, Studio Movie Grill—Chatham*

Things to Come

William Cameron Menzies (better known as art director for, among others, *Gone With the Wind*, *Around the World in 80 Days*, and *The Thief of Bagdad*) directed this imaginative, only occasionally naive 1936 forecast of the age of nuclear warfare. Adapted by H.G. Wells from his own *The Shape of Things to Come* and produced by Alexander Korda, it stars Raymond Massey and Ralph Richardson. —**DON DRUKER** *100 min. Screening with Jan Tichy's 2012 experimental work Things to Come, 1936-2012 (6 min.). Tichy attends the screening. Fri 5/24, 7 PM. Logan Center for the Arts* **FREE**

N Walking on Water

Curiously artless for a movie about the art world, this prosaic documentary profile of famed installation artist Christo focuses on the creation and reception of his project *The Floating Piers*, an expansive, lightweight walkway that sat atop Italy's Lake Iseo in mid-2016. Director Andrey Paounov takes a thorough look at Christo's process, showing how he designs the project, works with others to realize it, then monitors how visitors to the site engage with it. The film has little to say about what the artist hopes to express with his work; Paounov is more interested in the logistics of such a large-scale project, devoting considerable screen time to how

Christo and his team manage to keep the piers afloat. This features some lovely overhead shots of the project, and it offers a sympathetic portrait of Christo as well. Still, you might come away from the film wishing it had greater thematic heft. In English and subtitled Italian. —**BEN SACHS** *100 min. Fri 5/24–Thu 5/30, 2:30, 4:45, 7:10, and 9:20 PM. Music Box*

ALSO PLAYING

N Aladdin

Guy Ritchie directs Disney's live-action remake of the 1992 animated film. With Will Smith, Mena Massoud, Naomi Scott, and Marwan Kenzari. *PG, 128 min. Block 37, ArcLight, Century 12 and CineArts 6, Chatham 14, Cicero Showplace 14, City North 14, Ford City, Galewood Crossings, Harper Theater, Lake Theatre, Navy Pier IMAX, River East 21, Showplace ICON, 600 N. Michigan, Webster Place 11*

Arrangiarsi: Pizza and the Art of Living

Matteo Troncone directed this documentary about his reconnecting with his Neapolitan roots. *91 min. Wed 5/29, 7 PM. Music Box*

N August at Akiko's

Christopher Makoto Yogi directed this drama about a musician who travels to Hawaii looking for his ancestral home. *75 min. Facets Cinematheque*

Barbara Hammer: Declarations of Identity

A program of six experimental films (1973-83) by the late queer film pioneer Barbara Hammer. *75 min. Northwestern University Block Museum of Art* **FREE**

N Brightburn

A childless couple finds an infant in a meteor and decided to keep him. As he grows up, he discovers he has superpowers and turns violent. David Yarovesky

directed. With Elizabeth Banks, David Denman, Jackson A. Dunn, Matt Jones, and Meredith Hagner. *R, 90 min. ArcLight, Century 12 and CineArts 6, Chatham 14, Cicero Showplace 14, Ford City, Galewood Crossings, River East 21, Showplace ICON, 600 N. Michigan*

The Cabin in the Cotton

An early Bette Davis vehicle (1932), with Bette as a southern femme fatale leading sharecropper Richard Barthelmess to rack and ruin. Michael Curtiz directed. *78 min. 35 mm archival print. Sat 5/25–Sun 5/26, 11:30 AM. Music Box*

Crossing Delancey

Amy Irving stars in this 1988 romantic comedy about a successful Manhattan bookstore manager whose Lower East Side grandmother hires her a matchmaker. Joan Micklin Silver directed; with Peter Riegert, Reizl Bozyk, Sylvia Miles, and Jeroen Krabbe. *PG, 97 min. 35 mm. Wed 5/29, 7:30 PM. Northeastern Illinois University*

Dark Water

Hideo Nakata directed this Japanese horror film (2002) about a divorced mother and her young daughter who move into an apartment plagued by supernatural occurrences. In Japanese with subtitles. *PG-13, 101 min. Sun 5/26, 7 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films*

Galaxy Lords

Galactic Commander Helios must assemble a group of fighters to thwart an evil prince threatening the universe. Von Bilka directed this indie sci-fi comedy. *96 min. Bilka and select cast and crew attend the screening, which will be outdoors. Wed 5/29, 8:20 PM. Comfort Station* **FREE**

Be Natural



Home Video Day

The MCA Chicago, Media Burn Archive, and Video Data Bank host an afternoon of home video tape viewing and inspection. Attendees can bring tapes to screen. *Sat 5/25, noon-4 PM. Museum of Contemporary Art* **FREE**

The Image You Missed

Donal Foreman directed this Irish/French documentary about trying to connect with his late estranged father, who was also a documentary filmmaker, by searching through a trove of photos, film reels, and other items. *74 min. Thu 5/30, 7 PM. Northwestern University Block Museum of Art* **FREE**

The Left Handed Gun

Arthur Penn directed this 1958 western about William "Billy the Kid" Bonney (Paul Newman), a young cowboy bent on revenge when his boss is killed. *102 min. 35 mm. Fri 5/24, 7 and 9:30 PM; and Sun 5/26, 1:30 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films*

Nureyev

David Morris and Jacqui Morris directed this UK documentary about the celebrated dancer Rudolf Nureyev. *109 min. Fri 5/24, 2 and 6 PM; Sat 5/25, 2:45 PM; Sun 5/26, 4 and 8:15 PM; Mon 5/27, 3 PM; Wed 5/29, 6 PM; and Thu 5/30, 8 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center*

N The Perfection

Richard Shepard directed this horror-thriller about classical musicians. *90 min. Streaming on Netflix.*

Some Films: Stage

A program featuring the 1972 concert film *Elvis on Tour* (90 min.), directed by Robert Abel and Pierre Adidge, along with various clips of Moor Mother, Kiss, and Public Image Limited. *99 min. Sat 5/25, 7 PM. Filmfront* **FI**



Plugging into Chicago's forgotten house venues

For decades, house music has shaped pop worldwide—but many of the spaces that birthed it here disappeared so quickly they barely left a trace.

By LEOR GALIL

About nine years ago, Mario Luna got a call from his mother. She'd been doing some spring cleaning in her home in Pilsen—the same house where he'd grown up—and she'd found a shoebox that clearly belonged to him. It held a stack of “pluggers,” which is what people in the local house-music scene called show flyers during the culture's infancy. She wanted to toss them. Luna thought better of it.

Luna, now 52, didn't even remember saving the flyers. But as soon he retrieved that box, he

could see that his instinct to hold onto them was correct. “I said, ‘Wow, these are cool. I'm gonna put them in plastic sheets—like baseball cards—in a three-ring binder, and just keep them for memories,’” he says. “People are going to look back at this time and say, ‘Man, those days were fun.’ DJs I know, my friends that were on these flyers, a lot of them don't have them.”

Almighty & Insane Books, which is based in New York but focuses on Chicago, released a collection of Luna's old pluggers in September 2018 called *Beyond Heaven: Chicago House*

Party Flyers From 1983-1989. The first-edition run of 1,000 copies sold out before the end of the year, and the publisher printed a second edition of 1,000 in December. Almighty & Insane founder Brandon Johnson especially wanted to document the eclectic aesthetic choices that promoters made as house began to cross over throughout the city. Many flyers used printed blocks of color as backgrounds for text and images—sometimes solid pink or red or blue, sometimes spanning a gradient (red to yellow to green, pink to white to blue). They occasionally included small headshots of the performers, which often looked like they could've come from driver's licenses or yearbooks—on one plugger promoting a battle of high school DJs, I'm almost certain they're literally yearbook pictures. Many of the most important figures in house history are on these flyers, including Ron Hardy, Steve “Silk” Hurley, and the original members of the Hot Mix 5.

As much as I liked seeing those familiar names on pluggers from before I was born, I

found myself more drawn to the unfamiliar ones—not just the performers but also the venues. More than three dozen places are named in *Beyond Heaven*, and few of them are meaningfully documented anywhere—the main exceptions are the Muzic Box, which

CHICAGO HOUSE MUSIC CONFERENCE

Featuring five overlapping panel discussions and workshops, including “The Anatomy of a Groove: House in Borrowed Spaces” with DJ Duane Powell, Silver Room owner Eric Williams, Warehouse and Muzic Box founder Robert Williams, and others. Thu 5/23, 6 PM-9 PM, Chicago Cultural Center, 78 E. Washington, free, all ages

CHICAGO HOUSE MUSIC FESTIVAL

Featuring one stage of music on Friday and five stages on Saturday, with performances and workshops by Gene Hunt, Mark Grusane, the Era Footwork Crew, Gant-Man, Moodymann, Mr. A.L.I. & Carla Prather, Rae Chardonnay, Boogie McClarin, and many more. Fri 5/24, 6:30 PM-9 PM, and Sat 5/25, 2 PM-9 PM, Millennium Park, 201 E. Randolph, free, all ages

entrepreneur Robert Williams opened after he wound down the Warehouse, and the Aragon Ballroom. The VFW halls, churches, high schools, hotels, juice bars, and clubs that appear in *Beyond Heaven* helped house expand beyond the mostly queer, mostly Black spaces that incubated the culture in the late 70s and early 80s. In late 1981, when WBMX hired the Hot Mix 5 to spin on the air, the potential audience for house music grew exponentially almost overnight, and for new fans who wanted to experience the music in the flesh—particularly those who were too young to get into gay dance clubs, or who didn't know they existed—these lesser-known venues were vital.

DJ and historian Duane Powell recognizes the need to celebrate these spaces. For the past four years, he's been part of the team behind the Chicago Black Social Culture Map, which documents important venues and performance spaces from the early Great Migration era in the 1910s and '20s till the end of the 20th century. And the rise of house provides a distinct challenge. “When house was king, it existed *ev-ery-where*,” Powell says. “I remember so many spaces that I was in that just wasn't even around long.”

Powell knows that a venue's life span doesn't always reflect its importance. ➔

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“Like, the nightclub the Reactor,” he says. “It was only open technically one summer—summer of 1990. It was open probably spring till fall. I think the owners still tried to do parties there, but the pinnacle of it was only that one summer. And you wouldn’t think just having a club just a summer would be as impactful. But it was the club that successfully handed the culture over to the next generation. It was the club that Ron Trent had his first residency, and DJ Rush. And these were the two main DJs that ushered in the house culture to the third or fourth generation of the house movement.”

On Thursday, May 23, Powell moderates a panel called “The Anatomy of a Groove: House in Borrowed Spaces” as part of the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events’ Chicago House Music Conference and Festival. The five panelists include Silver Room owner Eric Williams and Warehouse and Muzic Box founder Robert Williams, and the talk will focus on how the physical landscape of the house scene changed after its 1980s boom. Beginning in the 90s, the number of spaces hosting the music declined sharply thanks to a series of restrictive City Council ordinances—including a 1991 measure that required all-ages juice bars to obtain zoning permits and close by midnight. And as Powell says, “It is spaces, still, where our culture thrives.”

The Chicago House Music Conference and Festival is late to the party, given that house has been important not just in Chicago but around the world for more than 30 years. Though it does recognize the music as specifically Chicagoan, it leans hard on the boom years of the 80s—on Friday, May 24, for instance, DCASE presents pioneering 80s producer Chip E. with the Chicago House Music Award. Fortunately, many festival performers who started back then have never stopped

producing new work, and the bill also includes several acts that have taken house in radically new directions since the 90s, such as juke producer Gant-Man and footwork crew the Era. The one part of the culture that’s inarguably doing worse now than it was in the golden age is its infrastructure—actual physical rooms devoted to live house music. Because house was everywhere in the 80s, I wanted to learn more about some of the lesser-known places that helped build it into the cultural juggernaut it remains today. With *Beyond Heaven*, I saw a chance.

Luna caught the bug listening to the Hot Mix 5 on WBMX in the early 80s, and he bought crates of dance 12-inches from Importes Etc. and Loop Records. Around 1986, he cofounded a Pilsen collective called the Ultimate Party Crew, and he took his DJ name, “Liv It Up,” from a 1981 track by Dutch synth-pop band the Time Bandits. The UPC threw its first show in 1988 in the common hall of Saints Peter and Paul Church at 3745 S. Paulina, where cofounding DJ Luis Aguilera worked after school. Luna held onto the flyer for that gig, as well as pluggers he’d pick up on weekly trips to Importes Etc.

Luna didn’t make it to all the shows advertised in *Beyond Heaven*—it’s doubtful any single human could have—but he did remember some of the venues. And in some cases, memories are all that remain: Grand Manor burned in 1994, and the Rainbo roller rink was torn down in 2003 to make room for condos. (Saints Peter and Paul Church still stands, and so do some of the other buildings—though they’ve changed hands and been put to other uses.) Because these shows happened at least 30 years ago, I didn’t want to rely on Luna’s memory exclusively in any case—I tracked down several other DJs and promoters who were active in the 80s to learn more about what made a few of these places special.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

- LUIS AGUILERA** Producer, cofounder of the Ultimate Party Crew
- TONY BITOY** Rainbo roller rink promoter from 1983 till 1989
- CHIP E.** Producer of 1986’s influential *Time to Jack*
- PABLO “PUNKOUT” GONZALEZ** On-air personality for south-side station WCYC, north-side club DJ
- RICK LENOIR** Rainbo roller rink resident DJ, member of production duo LNR
- MARIO “LIV IT UP” LUNA** Cofounder of the Ultimate Party Crew
- RICH MARTINEZ** WCYC DJ, Trax Records artist, member of party organizers Fusion Dance Promotions
- MICKEY “MIXIN” OLIVER** Original member of the Hot Mix 5
- FRANKIE “HOLLYWOOD” RODRIGUEZ** Member of the Hot Mix 5

• • • • •

GRAND MANOR

5436 S. Archer, burned down

Pluggers in *Beyond Heaven* advertise appearances here by the original Hot Mix 5, Steve “Silk” Hurley, Frankie “Hollywood” Rodriguez, and Trax Records artist Jesse Velez.

FRANKIE RODRIGUEZ It was only a couple of places in Chicago that the kids could rent out that held more than 300 people, and that was one of them.

RICH MARTINEZ It was a basic venue where people would rent out for private parties and what have you. It probably held close to 500 to maybe 800 people.

MARIO LUNA A lot of people, once they saw that the attendance was great—a lot of people used to flock to these places—they would hold dances there and hang onto these halls every weekend.

RICH MARTINEZ The promotions that I was with, Fusion Dance Promotions, we started booking that hall as well to throw our own parties there.

MICKEY OLIVER Guys would rent that out—I think they’d, like, wrassle with each other to get that place rented out, because it always seemed to draw a good crowd based on where it was located.

RICH MARTINEZ It was right on Archer and Cicero there. It was very accessible from the south side.

FRANKIE RODRIGUEZ If we were all going to DJ at the Manor on a Friday or Saturday night, you had three, four, five hundred kids showing up.

MARIO LUNA It used to be packed. It was all hit-or-miss, some of these dance halls; Grand Manor, that was a hit.

RICH MARTINEZ They had a mini stage—it wasn’t an elevated stage. It was maybe a few feet off the ground.

FRANKIE RODRIGUEZ When you get done working, you step down and you’re in the middle of two, three hundred people talking to you. And if you suck, they let you know. That’s another thing too; if you were a little off, or you played a song that didn’t work out really well, they would let you know pretty quick.

You can see that reaction there.

MICKEY OLIVER The crowd was always really responsive to the sound.

FRANKIE RODRIGUEZ I remember the room being open, and it had a raw feel to it. It wasn’t controlled by big production companies. It was more of a grassroots type of place, where you could—not meaning this in a bad way at all—where you could just get down and dirty and nobody was bugging you. You can just let loose.

MARIO LUNA Everybody used to go there every weekend, just because the names on the flyers, and maybe they have a performer that made a record that was there in concert.

FRANKIE RODRIGUEZ Places like the Manor, you would see that artist on the flyer, and you’d pay five bucks, and they’d be there. Even if they weren’t on the flyer to perform that night, they’d be hanging out. And I gotta tell you, several times the DJ would hand the microphone over to somebody in the crowd and they would sing along with a track, and the kids all got something extra out of it.

RICH MARTINEZ One memorable party there was in ’85, with Jesse Velez; he was a young Puerto Rican DJ from the north side who had this monster hit on Trax called “Girls Out on the Floor.” He was the featured act. Me and Miguel Rodriguez played on four turntables. That was the first time two DJs got together to do that—to do one mix on four turntables. So while I was blending one thing in, he was coming in with another thing. It was something that we came up with, and a lot of DJ acts were doing after we did it.

FRANKIE RODRIGUEZ Kids came from the suburbs, they came from Indiana, they came from Wisconsin, all of the surrounding areas. You would drive down and you would all be one—there was no race, color, or creed at those parties at the Manor. Everybody was there for one purpose, and that was just to party and have a good time.

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AMERICAN LEGION POST #271

4416 S. Western, now a church

Pluggers in *Beyond Heaven* advertise appearances here by Jamie Principle, Kenny



COURTESY OF ALMIGHTY & INSANE BOOKS

“Jammin” Jason, Julian “Jumpin” Perez, Carl Bias, and Rich Martinez.

LUIS AGUILERA It was bare-bones, high ceilings. Fog lights would work really well in there. It was all very low-tech.

MARIO LUNA The Grand Manor and American Legion hall, they were like competition, so to speak—one would try to outdo the other as far as the events for that weekend.

MARIO LUNA They used to hold a lot of major, major concerts—the whole aura of it was just great, everything would just consume you soon as you walked in.

roof, and so there were a lot of shout-outs, and a lot of people competing.

SAINTS PETER AND PAUL CHURCH HALL

Pluggers in *Beyond Heaven* advertise appearances here by Mario “Liv It Up” Luna and the rest of the Ultimate Party Crew.

LUIS AGUILERA I offered that place to my crew. I made the proposal to my boss at the time, the priest, and told him we would be able to provide a donation to the church, as well as make sure that the place was safeguarded. He gave us the go-ahead to do so, because we had actually been using the church-hall basement—the rectory basement—for our meetings, which were taking place once a week. It was becoming a very well-structured organization. So that's how we ended up using that hall for two or three events.

LUIS AGUILERA The actual events were in the church hall, which had a capacity of ➔

>>>>>>>>>> 2019 <<<<<<<<<<<

UPCOMING SHOWS

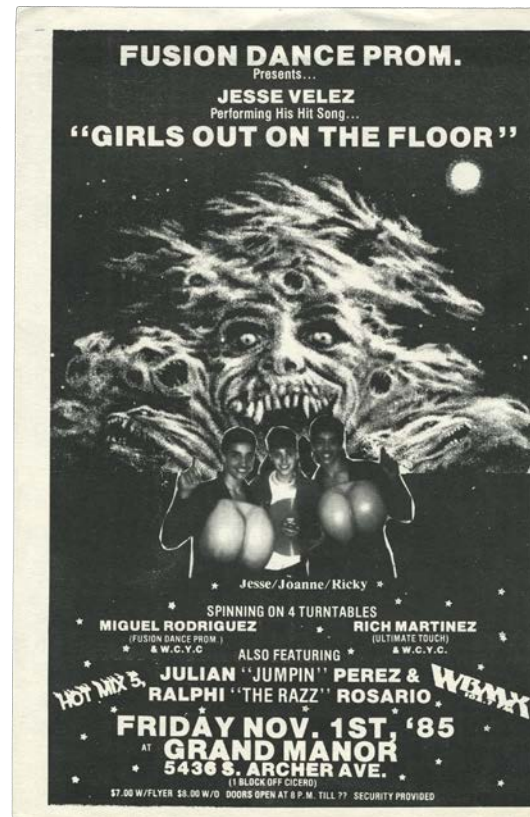
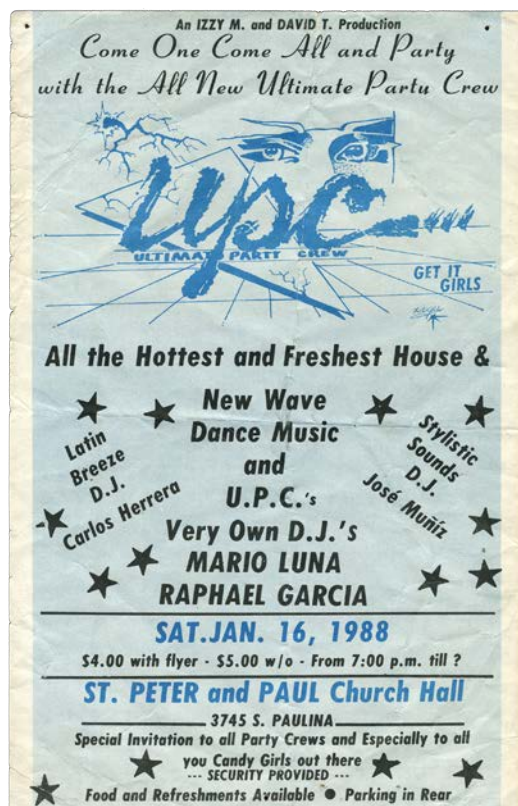
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- 5.30 The Damned & X w/ The Detroit Cobras
- 6.6 NAV w/ Killly LOW TICKET WARNING
- 6.7 The Prince Experience
- 6.8 Josh Garrels w/ the Gray Havens
- 6.12 Ones To Watch Presents A R I Z O N A w/ MORGXN LOW TICKET WARNING
- 6.19 Lovelytheband w/ Flora Cash & New Dialogue LOW TICKET WARNING
- 6.20 93.9 Lite FM Presents Howard Jones, Men Without Hats & All Hail The Silence
- 6.21 Alex Aiono w/ 4th Ave & Aja9
- 6.28 Chon w/ DOMi + JD Beck
- 6.29 Anberlin 6.30 Anberlin
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Pluggers from Saints Peter and Paul Church (the first show by the Ultimate Party Crew), Rainbo roller rink, and the Grand Manor (where Rich Martinez and Miguel Rodriguez of Fusion Dance Promotions did a live mix with four turntables)

COURTESY OF ALMIGHTY & INSANE BOOKS

continued from 25

about 500 people at most. And we rammed it, we really basically got it up to 500, and were able to make enough of a tidy profit to feed into the UPC football team—because we had a football team, we had a basketball team. We also had a DJ group.

MARIO LUNA Lo and behold, it was a hit. After that, more dances were being held at that hall for a while. That was the birth of the party crew.

LUIS AGUILERA Very low ceilings, at most eight feet high, and a very subterranean feel to it—very dingy. But we turned off the lights, we set up the tables, and it really was all about the music at that time. People were just having a great time dancing, listening to the music, and pushing the frontiers of electronic music.

MARIO LUNA Once they did something at a church hall, if they saw that it was a success, they would keep doing it over and over, because they see that the kids will come back to it the next weekend.

LUIS AGUILERA We'd have these events on Saturday night, and we were very well understanding that there would be mass the next day. We would normally end our events at one or two in the morning; I would be out there at

two in the morning, picking up, and I'd come back in the morning and do the rest of the cleanup before mass started. We actually had a police officer stationed at the front of the entrance, making sure that there was some level of security as well for us. So it was really well planned out.

CENTRUM HALL

1309 N. Ashland, now condos

Pluggers in *Beyond Heaven* advertise appearances here by Julian “Jumpin” Perez, Kenny “Jammin” Jason, Ralphy “the Razz” Rosario, Carl Bias, Pablo “Punkout” Gonzalez, and Rich Martinez.

MARIO LUNA I grew up near Ashland and 18th Street, so I used to take Ashland all the way up north—a lot of the north-side DJs would hold their dances there, at Centrum Hall.

PABLO GONZALEZ Places like Centrum Hall were the avenue for older teens to listen to house music and basically dance all night.

MARIO LUNA North-side DJs—the way they mixed, the way the dance performers used to perform—it was just a whole different crowd.

It's hard to pinpoint exactly, but you knew you were on the north side, because they just had a different style of their own. The DJs, the dancers—everything, all in one nutshell, was different.

RICH MARTINEZ I remember going into the foyer, and there were steps that went up into the hall—it was like about a five-step staircase. And it was huge.

PABLO GONZALEZ It had a stage and a nice bar. We were able to fit, like, over 500 people in comfortably.

MARIO LUNA It was just a big, high-ceilinged hall. Spacious—a lot of room to dance. The sound—the speakers would grab you.

PABLO GONZALEZ I would be there like every other month, almost, for about a year, almost two years.

MARIO LUNA The lineup—you wanted to see who was there again. Sometimes they'd have these performers onstage singing their songs—you wanted to see them there too.

PABLO GONZALEZ What killed Centrum was the birth of the Rainbo roller rink in the later 80s, because they took that concept up to a bigger level.

RAINBO ROLLER RINK

4836 N. Clark, torn down for condos

Pluggers in *Beyond Heaven* advertise appearances here by J.M. Silk, Kevin Irving, White Knight, Marshall Jefferson, Phuture, Armando, Mike Dunn, Farley “Jackmaster” Funk, Julian “Jumpin” Perez, and Rick Lenoir.

RICK LENOIR I was a resident there for a little while, when we first started doing dance parties there on Saturdays.

TONY BITOY The groups that I initially hired, I was doing all of the hip-hop acts.

RICK LENOIR When we first started, we had to get people to adapt to “No, you're not skating, we're playing dance music.” It wasn't all house music—it was still in its infancy. So we were playing a lot of New York breakbeat electro, Afrika Bambaataa, some of the early freestyle-type stuff, a lot of the Italian disco imports that were starting to come into the States.

MARIO LUNA It was huge, so you weren't crunched up. You weren't shoulder to shoulder, you can't move or you can't dance, like the little small halls, where they can only fit in so many people. This place was enormous.

TONY BITOY It was a big place. I had to do big numbers.

RICK LENOIR A room that big, we had to work really hard to get people in there. At first it was tough, but as time went on we would do a couple of big events and some concerts, and more and more people started to come.

TONY BITOY What happened with the house-music thing is, I knew everybody because they were from here. They were all young. I did Jesse Saunders when nobody knew who Jesse Saunders was. They all came to me, talking about they wanted to do a show. Marshall Jefferson—I tease Marshall to this day, because when he first did a show there, and they had the record... *The House Music Anthem* was blowing up on the radio and everything, so when he did his show at the Rainbo, there was no template for how to perform. There was no house acts. So when they showed up, they had on these sequins-type jackets, and they had Temptations moves. People do what they know—they were doing the whole thing, but their moves were like the Temptations.

RICK LENOIR Ultimately it became one of the premier dance clubs in the city.

TONY BITOY I was converting a skating rink into a party. An hour after their last skating session on Saturday, they would have to clean up real quick. I would cover up where they had the roller skates, the rentals—I would draw the curtain over there. We dim down the lights. It was a whole thing just to try to give it that whole club atmosphere.

CHIP E. He had a great sound system and great lighting. When you walk into the place, you wouldn't have thought it was a roller rink—you'd think it was just a regular nightclub. He really got the decor just right.

TONY BITOY It was a skating rink, you know, with very high ceilings, and the sound system—I would have to supplement stuff to come in there.

MARIO LUNA The sound system there, you used to feel it in your chest—the speakers, the bass. They had a light show there—the smoke, the lights, and the sound, it just brought you in.

RICK LENOIR The thing that was unique about Rainbo, it allowed adults 21 and older on the upper level, so they had an open bar with adults on the top level. Then the bottom level was all dancing, underage—18, 17 and up.

TONY BITOY It was an all-ages party that went till five in the morning, if you believe it or not.

RICK LENOIR As kids, to be able to go to a place that was not a school gymnasium or a loft, to be able to go into an actual club, with lights and sounds in a room that big, was pretty exciting.

CHIP E. Tony went a little bit above and beyond and to make sure that it was a first-class sound system, first-class lighting system. His flyers were always top-notch. The acts that were there—there were a lot of small clubs and juice bars, but they didn't really bring in a lot of live entertainment.

TONY BITOY I did the New York-versus-Chicago battle of the DJs—that was the biggest crowd, we had to shut the doors down.

We had over 4,000 people in there, and then we had so many outside that the city brought in horses and everything else.

RICK LENOIR By the time we got to '85, it was really running downhill—in a good way. It was just “Open the doors and folks are showing up.”

TONY BITOY Rainbo was great for roller skating, and it was great for big parties and everything, but you had to have a thousand people to get any kind of ambience in a big open room like that. I got tired of that.

CHIP E. What I really miss about the Rainbo and places like that is it was a time when people didn't put as much emphasis on the DJs or the performer per se, and really danced and enjoyed themselves. Sometimes when I'm playing big festivals now, all eyes are on me—I kind of wish it was back at the Rainbo, where people were looking at each other, dancing with each other, and I was kind of in the background. I like that. 

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6.10 CHI-TOWN SINGS - BRITNEY VS. CHRISTINA

6.13 LINDSAY LOU

6.14 JON B.

6.18 ANNE STEELE & LEVI KREIS

UPCOMING SHOWS

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5.25 BIG BAD VOODOO DADDY

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6.25 PENNY ARCADE - LONGING LASTS LONGER

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6.30 SERGIO MENDES

MAY 30



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MAY 31



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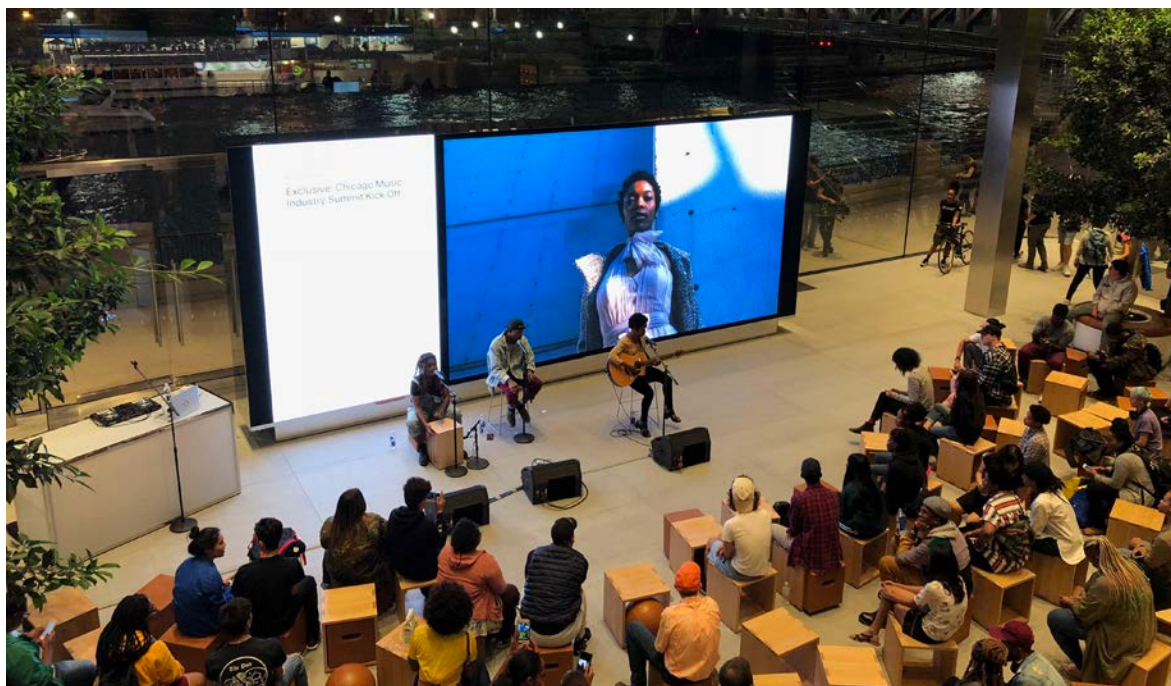
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JUNE 3



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MAY 23, 2019 • CHICAGO READER 27



Loona Dae performs at the Apple Store on Michigan Avenue in August 2018.

© JONATHAN FRANK

Too big to pay

Apple is so influential that it can compensate the performers at its in-store events with merchandise and exposure—and no one will complain.

By JACK RIEDY

Since the Michigan Avenue Apple Store opened in 2017, its Macbook-sleek design and proximity to the river have attracted crowds of Mag Mile shoppers, not just to buy or to seek tech support for Apple products but also to attend free events from the store's busy calendar of classes, panel discussions, live interviews, and performances. As part of its Today at Apple series, the tech giant's flagship Chicago location regularly hosts local musicians and other creative workers in front of an enormous video wall—a space it calls the Forum. But though it's one of the wealthiest companies in history, with a high-profile foothold in Chicago, Apple doesn't pay these performers.

Chicagoans who've been involved in these events confirm that the company offers a narrow selection of its own products as compensation—in the words of an Apple press representative, “a product gift for participating.”

The Today at Apple series began in 2017 at Apple stores across the country, including several other locations in Chicagoland. Performances (musical and otherwise) are generally limited to stores in major cities such as New York, Chicago, and San Francisco. In March, Bay Area NPR outlet KQED confirmed that stores in San Francisco follow similar compensation practices for artists.

Producer, rapper, and singer Phoelix was offered his choice of an Apple Watch or an iPad for performing a few songs and participating in a Q&A in July 2018 (he picked the watch). Writer and marketer Lorena Cupcake, who moderated a panel in September 2018 as part of the monthlong Chicago Music Industry Summit, was offered an Apple Watch or an Apple TV streaming device. They initially planned to accept the watch, based on its higher resale value, and made their thinking clear to Apple staff: “Is it gonna be weird if I sell this Apple Watch?” In response, the com-

pany asked if there were something else they'd prefer. Cupcake took AirPods headphones instead: “It seems like they're willing to work with you if there's another Apple product that you want.”

Singer Loona Dae received four Apple Watches—for herself and three supporting musicians—in exchange for a 30-minute performance in August 2018, also part of the CMIS. She declined an Apple TV device because she doesn't own a TV. She estimates the watches were worth \$1,200 in total, though their value has likely decreased sharply since the updated Series 4 versions were rolled out in September. “They release different series so often, where they're able to give out materials before a new series is released because they know the value is going to be depreciated,” Dae says.

Dae would have preferred Apple products that would assist her creative work. She didn't bring it up at the time, but as alternatives she suggests music-production program Logic (which retails for \$199.99) or video-editing software Final Cut (\$299.99). “I think that it makes more sense to give the artists that are performing materials that are helpful to their craft,” she says.

Ten other participants in Today at Apple declined to comment on the record for this story, though one confirmed that they'd requested and received product as payment.

Earlier this month, current and former Apple employees told Bloomberg that the

stores “have become mostly an exercise in branding,” and the Today at Apple events clearly signal the company's shift toward emphasizing its place in communities (as does its rapidly expanding number of stores, which recently topped 500). According to a January 2019 press release, Today at Apple offers customers the opportunity to “get more out of their products, find inspiration in their community and discover guidance from world-class creators.” The same press release refers to the Forum's stools, stadium seating, and 23-foot 6K video screen as “a meeting place for the local community,” and in that sentence mentions that it's home to many Today at Apple events.

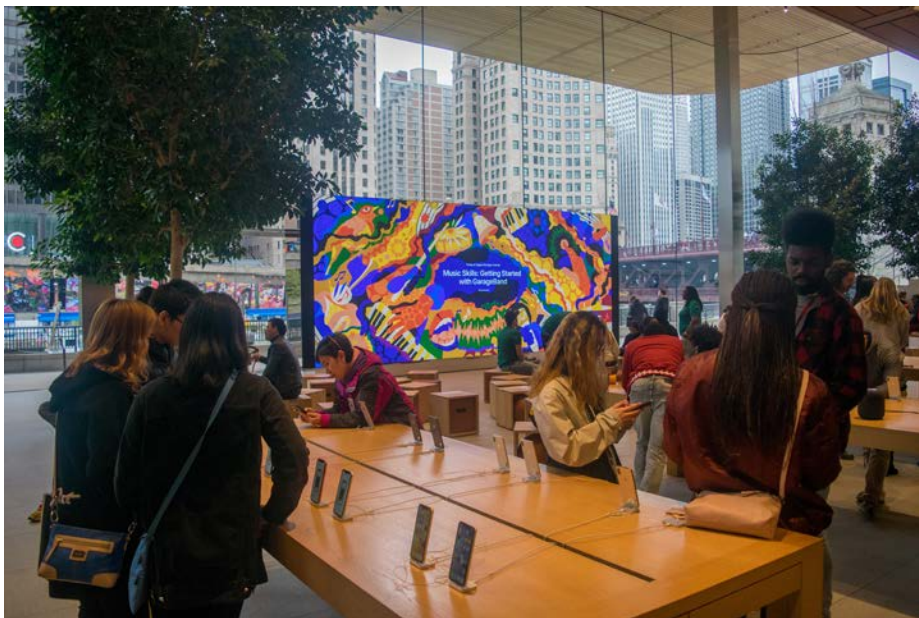
Emphasizing branding continues to pay off for Apple. The world's largest company by market value, it's worth nearly a trillion dollars, and it reported \$58 billion in revenue in the second quarter of 2019. According to *Crain's*, Apple pays \$2.5 million annually to rent the Michigan Avenue building (with a 10 percent increase every five years over the course of a 15-year lease), which is owned by Invesco, an Atlanta-based investment firm that recently bought it for \$79 million.

Considering the company's wealth and influence, even at a local level, it does surprisingly little to promote its events, apparently choosing to rely on the draw of the store itself to provide audiences for the occasional performance. Apple advertises in-store on its video wall and on what it calls “session tables.” It also posts listings on the Apple Store app and creates dedicated web pages on apple.com, though neither is a common destination for Chicagoans interested in learning what's happening around town. According to the Apple press representative, the company promotes events through “word of mouth by Apple retail employees during customer visits to the store and programs.”

Apple's social media accounts are conspicuously absent from this strategy. Individual Apple stores do not have their own accounts, and the corporate accounts don't promote local events. The Today at Apple series maintains no active Twitter or Instagram. In this arena, Apple relies on performers and their fans for promotion, though the company does custom graphics for online flyers, adding event details (in a very “Apple” white sans serif font) to artists' press photos.

Performers aren't required to do any promotion, though Dae explains that the company requested she post at least a week in advance and follow up with a “thank you” post ac-

MUSIC



The Forum of the Michigan Avenue Apple Store, with its video wall and movable wooden box seating, hosts many Today at Apple events. MARK BRABOY

knowledging that the event had happened. Apple photographers sometimes provide images of the events to the artists, but audio and video aren't typically professionally recorded.

Apple has had some success encouraging audience members to post on their own accounts, judging by the 83,000+ Instagram posts tagged #TodayAtApple—though that number sounds less impressive when you consider the vast number of events, which Apple itself pegs at 18,000 per week globally. But the company's follower counts are usually exponentially higher than the performers, speakers, educators, and other people involved in Today at Apple—if it made a single social media post per event, it'd give huge boosts to independent artists and creatives at minimal cost.

By relying largely on locals to promote themselves, Apple helps build the grassroots image it wants for itself. But it's a massive loss of potential exposure for the performers—Phoelix, Cupcake, and Loona Dae all said that the association with Apple was more important compensation than the products they were given.

Dae notes that an Apple event looks good on a resumé, and that hers made her feel “like more of a staple” in the local scene. Phoelix says that he made new fans with his Apple Store performance, and that he got new opportunities thanks to the resulting increase in

visibility. He appreciated the chance to show off more of his personality by interacting with the audience, since he's “such a studio head.” Cupcake explains that Apple's policy isn't necessarily unusual, because money is rarely on the table for speaking engagements outside academic circles. “The thing that Apple had that was of value to me is such a huge reach and such a high profile,” they say. Cupcake, who's nonbinary, also appreciated the care that Apple's staff paid to using their correct pronouns.

All three also would be interested in working with Apple again in some capacity. “They're really invested in artists and trying to get their feet wet in what's happening in local communities across the nation,” Dae says. “I just wish that it were on the scale of like, 2003 Apple, when they were pushing iPods and featuring indie artists and giving consumers a platform to discover, rather than just consume at their own discretion.”

Given that live music in Chicago is already threatened by multinational corporate domination, it's a relief to see a giant company extending opportunities to local and independent artists. But it'd be even better for Apple to compensate creatives in a way that would more directly help their work—or even pay their bills.

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PICK OF THE WEEK

Singer-songwriter Laura Stevenson captures intimacy in a bottle on *The Deep Freeze*



LAURA STEVENSON, SEE THROUGH DRESSES, COMPLETIONS

Wed 5/29, 8 PM, Beat Kitchen, 2100 W. Belmont, \$15. 17+

© RACHEL BRENNECKE

LISTENING TO *THE BIG FREEZE* (Don Giovanni), the fifth album from New York singer-songwriter Laura Stevenson, feels a little like eavesdropping on her innermost thoughts—an impression that owes as much to the raw, stripped-down acoustic arrangements as it does to Stevenson's songwriting. "A lot of my songs, I write for myself to deal with something that I am not ready to share with anybody," she told Noisey in March. But while she expresses her vulnerability through music, she's not always totally forthcoming. It's easy to hear anxiety and pain in "Dermatillomania," but if you don't know what its title means, you might not realize that Stevenson has struggled with that mental health disorder—

it's characterized by chronic, obsessive-compulsive skin picking. Stevenson recorded almost all of *The Big Freeze* at her mother's house: "That house was the place I felt safe," she told Stereogum in March. "That's the place I was sad, the place where I became who I am." She translates that sensation of safety and intimacy into the album's lilting, country-tinged strumming and soaring vocal melodies—she can wring the last drop of emotion out of every note. She's one of the most underrated artists in contemporary rock, but by her own account, she writes for herself first, rather than an audience—and *The Big Freeze* is a gift waiting to be discovered.

—LEOR GALIL

THURSDAY23

URS LEIMGRUBER See also *Friday* and *Saturday*. The Gerrit Hatcher Group headlines; Urs Leimgruber opens in a duo with Jim Baker. 9 PM, Elastic Arts, 3429 W. Diversey, \$10.

Soprano and tenor saxophonist Urs Leimgruber has covered a lot of ground since he first recorded in 1974. On his earliest recordings, with Swiss jazz-rock group Om (which predates by decades the heavy American band of the same name), he played muscular solos over surging rhythms. Since the 90s he's used several groups—including Quartet Noir and MMM, which both feature French bassist Joëlle Léandre, and a long-running trio with French pianist Jacques Demierre and American bassist Barre Phillips—to combine free improvisation with classical gestures, particularly Léandre's operatic singing. And in his work with German electronicist Thomas Lehn, which began in 2006, he matches tones so empathetically that it can be hard to tell where the reeds end and the synthesizer begins. Leimgruber is also committed to unaccompanied performance; on his seventh solo album, last year's *Broken Silence* (Creative Works), he uses splintered timbres and prickly pitches to illuminate the vast emptiness around his barely-there sounds. In any situation, Leimgruber brings an open-eared readiness to respond to whatever acoustic qualities and personalities he encounters, and during his current visit to Chicago (his first since 2015), he'll have several opportunities to test his versatility. On Monday, May 20, he performed solo and with two locals, bassist Jason Roebke and piano and synthesizer player Jim Baker, at Experimental Sound Studio. On Thursday, May 23, he and Baker will duet at Elastic, opening for a group led by Chicago saxophonist Gerrit Hatcher that includes Ben LaMar Gay, Keefe Jackson, Julian Kirshner, and Katie Ernst. On Friday, May 24, Leimgruber will perform at Constellation with local dancer Ayaka Kato under the name In Motion Duo, on a bill with two other dancer-musician pairings. And on Saturday, May 25, Leimgruber will play at Elastic with the great laptop improviser Ikue Mori and local electronic musician Paul Giallorenzo as part of the Transference Festival—an event that



Urs Leimgruber © PETER GANNUSHKIN



Chasms JESS GARTEN

seeks to duplicate onstage the daring mix of aesthetics that Northwestern's student radio station, WNUR, provides on the air. —**BILL MEYER**

FRIDAY24

CHASMS *Devon Church and DJ Philly Peroxide* open. 9 PM, Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western, \$12. 21+

Chasms, the Los Angeles duo of Jess Labrador and Shannon Madden, is essentially a dream-pop outfit. But while the ethereal voice sighs and meanders breathily toward nirvana—in the tradition of artists such as the Cocteau Twins, Ivy, and Damon & Naomi—the atmospheric instrumentals draw from more disparate influences, notably electronic dance music. Their new record, *The Mirage* (Felte), opens with “Shadow,” which starts with a sparse, distorted beat that could pass as a dub track—at least until processed guitar noises and Madden’s singing slide in and lift things off that thumping bottom. “Deep Love Deep Pain” feels like pop music for sad robots, as Chasms build melancholy lyrics and melody around a slowed-down techno beat. On the title track they employ a heavy industrial beat and a pace so slow it could appeal to doom-metal fans, exploring the considerable crossover between slow-core and shoegaze. And on the instrumental “No Savior,” a repetitive chiming guitar contrasts with grimy, ominously echoing beats that sound fit for a black-metal project. *The Mirage* encourages you to zone out—to let your eyes cross and your brain wander—only to zone back in to pick up on distinctive, unexpected details. Chasms may play dream pop, but they can pack an unusual amount of stuff into a dream. —**NOAH BERLATSKY**

CHICAGO HOUSE MUSIC FESTIVAL See also *Saturday. Mr. A.L.I. & Carla Prather headline; 8FatFat8 opens, followed by the Chip E. award presentation. 6:30 PM, Pritzker Pavilion at Millennium Park, 201 E. Randolph. FREE*

Ever since Frankie Knuckles died in 2014, Chicago’s Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE) has ramped up efforts to commemorate the sound and culture that the famous house DJ and producer helped birth. Over Memorial Day weekend in 2016, DCASE threw a six-hour “Chicago House Party” at Pritzker Pavilion, and its success inspired the department to develop the concept into a more robust event that includes a conference. In 2018, it finally became a full-fledged festival, with four stages spread throughout Millennium Park and a small army of record dealers selling dance 12-inches right by Cloud Gate. This year’s Chicago House Music Conference and Festival begins the evening of Thursday, May 23, with a slate of panels at the Cultural Center. Free to the public, these talks will address the history of house music and provide advice on how to get involved in the dance-music industry, among other things. The festival proper kicks off at Pritzker Pavilion the next night with two live sets (by 8FatFat8 and by Mr. A.L.I. with Carla Prather) and a short ceremony where pioneering producer Chip E. will receive the Chicago House Music Award. As it was last year, Saturday is the big day, with nearly two dozen acts on five stages. I recommend arriving early, and not only because last year the park reached capacity by midafternoon: the jam-packed lineup includes local boogie evangelist Mark Grusane, in-demand DJ Rae Chardonnay, and Josh Werner of 90s ambient collective Atmospheric Audio Chair, all of whom open the fest at 2 PM (at Pritzker Pavilion, the Deep House Stage, and the Park “Chill”

Grill Stage, respectively). Other highlights include Detroit house stylist Moodymann, juke pioneer Gant-Man, footwork collective the Era, and house veteran Gene Hunt, who headlines Pritzker. If you want to pick up some new moves, make sure to find a spot with a good view of the Family Jam Stage, which hosts dance workshops all day—and if you’ve already got all the moves you need, just try to find a spot where you’ve got enough room to use them. —**LEOR GALIL**

URS LEIMGRUBER See *Thursday. Urs Leimgruber and Ayako Kato headline as the In Motion Duo; Buzz (Jorrit Dijkstra and Jessica Roseman) and the duo of Peter Maunu and Damon D. Green* open. 8:30 PM, Constellation, 3111 N. Western, \$10. 18+

LOS MIRLOS *Buyepongo and the Pachanga DJs* open. 9 PM, Martyrs’, 3855 N. Lincoln, \$15. 21+

Many an artist claims to have psychedelic or surf influences, whether you can hear them or not. But in the case of Los Mirlos those flavors are immediately obvious. The septet, formed in Lima, Peru, in 1971, play *cumbia amazónica*, a tropical subgenre of Peruvian cumbia that reflects the life and customs of the region. They’re all excellent musicians, but their secret weapon is lead guitarist Danny López, who plays with a slight tremolo that calls to mind instrumental-rock greats such as Dick Dale, Duane Eddy, and the Ventures. The electric guitar dominates Los Mirlos’ sound in a way seldom heard in traditional cumbia, but the rock influence enhances the stew instead of watering it down. The band call their sound “party music,” and though it may not be as ebullient as you’d expect from that description, its languid rhythms have a way of catching up with you on the dance floor. —**JAMES PORTER**

SEBADOH *Flower* opens. 8 PM, SPACE, 1245 Chicago Ave., Evanston, sold out.

Listening to some of the tracks on the new *Act Surprised* (Dangerbird/Fire), Sebadoh’s ninth studio album, you could almost imagine yourself back in 1992. But though the band’s signature lo-fi sound remains, their lyrics place them squarely in the ➔

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Los Mirlos © COURTESY THE ARTIST

continued from 31

present. Perhaps that's the logical progression for Sebadoh, which formed as a duo in Northampton, Massachusetts, in 1988. After releasing three albums and more than half a dozen EPs in just a few years, the messily prolific group signed with Sub Pop in 1992 and became critical darlings during the grunge era. But in 1999, after several lineup shifts, the band began a hiatus that extended throughout much of the next decade, broken up by occasional reunion tours. In 2011 Sebadoh cofounder Lou Barlow and Jason Loewenstein, who'd joined the original duo in 1989, teamed up for one of those tours with drummer Bob D'Amico—and that lineup soon released the band's first new material in 13 years, 2012's *Secret EP*, followed by the 2013 album *Defend Yourself*. For their new full-length, the band brought in engineer Justin Pizzoferrato (who has also worked with one of Barlow's other bands, Dinosaur Jr.), and the resulting jangly, fuzzy, guitar-driven songs are, as per band tradition, mostly by Barlow and Loewenstein. They each wrote seven tracks, and D'Amico contributed "Leap Year," a reference to recent political events: "There are folk tales about leap years and their disconnection from reality," he says in the band's current press bio, "and 2016 was a leap

year that won't end." Several songs—including opener "Phantom"—clock in at just over two minutes, imbuing the album with a sense of urgency. "Raging River" alludes to outrage culture and the increase in citizens policing one another via social media. On other songs, including "Celebrate the Void" and "Medicate" (which decries taking shortcuts to mental ease and spirituality), Barlow continues his confessional approach to songwriting. Judging from past performances, fans at Sebadoh's sold-out show at SPACE can expect an informal set more focused on substance than style. —KIRSTEN LAMBERT

SHORTLY *Small Talks* and *Elton John Cena*
open. 7 PM, Schubas, 3159 N. Southport, \$12. 18+

Built around the demos of Detroit-based singer, guitarist, and pianist Alexandria Maniak, Shortly has evolved from an emo-tinged indie-rock solo project into a full-fledged band. The four-piece group show their promise on their debut EP, *Richmond*, released on Triple Crown last September. On standouts "Finders Keepers" and "Spare Time," Shortly strike a balance between fragility and propulsive momentum, accenting Maniak's quivering, beautifully vul-

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THE SECRET HISTORY OF CHICAGO MUSIC

PIVOTAL CHICAGO MUSICIANS THAT SOMEHOW HAVE NOT GOTTEN THEIR JUST DUES BY PLASTIC CRIMEWAVE

Universal Togetherness Band

ONE OF CHICAGO'S GREATEST BUT LEAST HEARD FUNKY DANCE BANDS OWES ITS EXISTENCE TO ANDRE GIBSON. BORN JANUARY 24, 1966, IN WASHINGTON PARK, GIBSON SAW THE LIKES OF THE TEMPTATIONS AND STEVIE WONDER AT THE NEARBY REGAL THEATER AS A KID. BY 1962, HIS FAMILY SHARED A BUILDING WITH R&B BAND THE MACHINE COMPANY, WHOSE ORGANIST RONNIE HICKS MADE AN IMPRESSION ON THE YOUNG GIBSON. AT CHICAGO VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL, THE BUDDING KEYBOARDIST ADDED Mallet Percussion, Cello, AND FLUTE TO HIS ARSENAL. WHILE WORKING AS A BELLHOP, GIBSON ACQUIRED A FAFISA AND FORMED HIS FIRST BAND, BLUE FLAME, WITH YOUNGER BROTHER ARNOLD ON DRUMS. IN 1973 HE STARTED AT ILLINOIS STATE IN BLOOMINGTON, STUDYING MUSIC THERAPY, PLAYING WITH THE BLACK ART JAZZ PERFORMERS, AND ASSEMBLING THE BAND FOREAL. GIBSON RETURNED TO CHICAGO IN 1976, ENLISTING MEMBERS OF BLUE FLAME AND FOREAL FOR THE GROUP COLOR-VISION AND TAKING AN R&B JOB AT CBS MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS. IN 1978 HE ENROLLED AT COLUMBIA COLLEGE AND FORMED THE UNIVERSAL TOGETHERNESS BAND, BEGINNING WITH HIS BROTHER ARNOLD (WHO'D ALSO LEARNED FRENCH HORN & BASS) AND TWINS FRED & LESLIE MISHNER (BOTH FROM

FOREAL). STARTING IN 1979, COLUMBIA STUDENTS INSTRUCTED BY LEGENDARY ENGINEER MALCOLM CHISHOLM RECORDED UTB FOR FREE IN CHICAGO STUDIOS UNIVERSAL AND ZENITH, WHERE GIBSON ADDED MUSICIANS FROM THE BLACK ART JAZZ PERFORMERS. BY 1980, UTB WAS THRIVING AS A LIVE ACT, PLAYING AT CHICAGO FEST AND OPENING FOR PETER GABRIEL, BUT AFTER GIBSON QUIT COLUMBIA IN SPRING '82, THE GROUP BEGAN TO UNRAVEL. THAT FALL THEY APPEARED ON THE WCUI VARIETY SHOW "THE CHICAGO PARTY," SYNCHING TO THE INFECTIOUS "PULL UP," BUT SOON GIBSON HAD TO USE A CASIO AND DRUM MACHINE OR A REVOLVING-DOOR STUDIO LINEUP. THE UTB'S RECORDINGS WERE ALMOST LOST, BUT IN 2014 AND IS THEY GOT A BELATED FIRST RELEASE FROM THE NUMERO GROUP, WHICH WORKED WITH RESEARCHER JON KIRBY ON AN ALBUM-LENGTH COMPILATION AND 2 SINGLES. NOW EVERYONE CAN HEAR GIBSON'S PIONEERING MIX OF JAZZ FUSION, NEW WAVE, SOUL, DISCO, AND R&B.

- THANKS TO ANDRE, JON KIRBY & ROB SEVIER.

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07/10 - HEART BONES (HAR MAR SUPERSTAR + SABRINA ELLIS)
07/11 - TOGETHER PANGAEA + TIJUANA PANTHERS
07/14 - KAINA (RELEASE SHOW)
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32 CHICAGO READER • MAY 23, 2019



Shortly
EMILY NAGLE

nerable voice with reverbed-out rock. On “Finders Keepers,” a tune that wouldn’t sound out of place on an American Football album, Maniak sings of friendship lost and garments left behind: “All I have is a flannel shirt you gave to me / All you have of mine you can keep / I don’t want it back now,” she sings. “Spare Time” begins delicately, with Maniak looking back on a broken relationship over acoustic guitar, piano, and lap-steel guitar. More than halfway through, the song becomes a full-band rock number, with Maniak turning her eye on herself: “Maybe I should grow up / Maybe I should be fine / Or maybe I am make believe / Maybe I am the puppet strings.” *Richmond* also includes touches of Americana and folk, and in recent interviews Maniak has spoken about pushing the band’s limits, so expect a broader sound moving forward. Shortly will be releasing new material this summer, and you’re likely to hear some during tonight’s show—which I highly recommended for fans of sensitive music in intimate venues. —**SCOTT MORROW**

SATURDAY 25

ASEETHE, BLOODYMINDED, STANDER

Aseethe headline; Bloodyminded, Ikaray, and Stander open. 9:30 PM, Sleeping Village, 3734 W. Belmont, \$10. 21+

This show is a special treat for several reasons, but first and foremost, it’s a triple release party. Staggeringly heavy Iowa City doom trio **Aseethe** are about to release their third full-length, *Throes* (Thrill Jockey), which they recorded in Chicago with Shane Hochstetler. The album addresses climate change and the rise of fascism, and proves that Aseethe are not going gently into that good night. Instead they present a gradual, inexorable apocalypse that can’t be averted once it starts to build its somber momentum. One of the most savage tracks on *Throes*, “To Victory,” opens on an elegant funeral note before erupting into a prolonged, elabo-

rate cry of fury. **Bloodyminded** gigs are rare, since the group’s members—currently or formerly of Anatomy of Habit, Indian, Wolves in the Throne Room, Ferro Mortem, and the Fortieth Day, among other projects—are spread out among Chicago, New York, and France. Their forthcoming self-titled album, the long-awaited follow-up to 2013’s *Within the Walls*, is a momentous effort and not an easy listen. The band’s sound is in some ways a refinement of industrial music and power electronics, and they deliver it live in a declamatory performance-art style that puts performers and audience alike on trial—it’s cathartic, mesmerizing, and demanding. Local trio **Stander** are about to release their cassette *The Slow Bark* (also available digitally, of course), and though they’re lighter than Aseethe or Bloodyminded, with a trippy, jammy quality to their music, they’re far from shallow. Stander draw from 70s blues-rock for their sense of melody and rhythm, to which they also add a dose of 90s math rock and a delightful jolt of funk. —**MONICA KENDRICK**

CHICAGO HOUSE MUSIC FESTIVAL See Friday. With Gene Hunt, Reel People Live, Tony Humphries, First Lady, Mark Grusane, Khari B, and more. 2 PM, Pritzker Pavilion at Millennium Park, 201 E. Randolph. **FREE** **ALL**

URS LEIMGRUBER See Thursday. Part of *Transference Fest. Bergsonist headlines; King Vision Ultra (Geng) and Ikue Mori (in a group with Urs Leimgruber and Paul Giallorenzo) open. 9 PM, Elastic Arts, 3429 W. Diversey, \$10. **ALL***

ELI WINTER Sam Wagster opens. 8:30 PM, *Constellation, 3111 N. Western, \$15. 18+*

The first time I saw 21-year-old Texas native Eli Winter perform was about a year ago, when he opened for Ryley Walker at the Chicago record-release show for Walker’s *Deafman Glance*. He ➔



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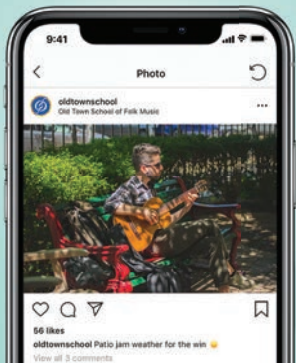
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MUSIC

continued from 33

told an adorable story about catching Walker at a show in Winter's hometown of Houston and being overwhelmed with nerves when they talked at the merch table—and crazily enough, now here he was, not only living in the same town as Walker (who's since moved to New York) but also sharing the stage with him. The appreciation is clear on Winter's new *The Time to Come*, his first proper full-length and his debut for Houston's Blue Hole Recordings. His music recalls Walker's early material: he writes beautiful, winding, Fahey-flavored compositions for fingerstyle solo acoustic guitar, and they seem wise beyond his years. Though Winter began the sessions for the album in Houston after the devastation of Hurricane Harvey, his warm, uplifting spirit and lush melodies hint at hope—this isn't the soundtrack to the harsh bleakness of the storm's toll, but rather to the sun rising over a new day. Rich and inviting, *The Time to Come* is especially impressive for coming so early in the songwriter's career. The future is bright for Eli Winter, and we're lucky to be able to witness it. —**LUCA CIMARUSTI**

SUNDAY26

FULL OF HELL Primitive Man, Genocide Pact, Hate Force, and Ledge open. 7 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 2105 S. State, \$15. 17+

Grindcore and powerviolence were born in part from a desire to push the limits of what music can do. But like countless other artistic movements, somewhere down the line many practitioners got stuck in clichés and conventions. That's not the case with Full of Hell. The group, which has members in Maryland and Pennsylvania, is one of the most explorative, challenging, and ferocious bands in their scene. Since forming in 2009 they've put out a slew of EPs and splits, three collaborative albums with like-minded adventurous heavyweights Merzbow and the Body, and four full-lengths of their own—most recently this month's *Weeping Choir* (Relapse). In an interview with *Exclaim*, vocalist Dylan Walker described the record as a sister album to 2017's celebrated *Trumpeting Ecstasy*. "Trumpeting was like a bubble being popped in my personal life and kind of like a very 'moment in time' record just based on what was going on in the Western world," he said. "Weeping Choir is kind of all that's left in the wake of that." For Full of Hell, though, the aftermath of trauma doesn't provide a moment of reprieve—it's just as brutal as the onslaught that precedes it. Starting with the foreboding "Burning Myrrh," the band fully enmesh the listener into their bleak universe, using staticky machine-gun percussion ("Rainbow Coil") or plodding, fit-for-streetcleaner soundscapes ("Angels Gather Here"). Most impressive might be "Armory of Obsidian Glass," a shape-shifting, sludgy epic intensified with otherworldly vocals from guest Lingua Ignota. The album clocks in under 25 minutes, but that's more than enough time for Full of Hell to conjure a vision so devastating and caustic that your daily dose of bad news might sound uplifting by comparison. —**JAMIE LUDWIG**



Jamila Woods
© LAWRENCE AGYEI

JAMILA WOODS Nitty Scott opens. 8 PM, Thalia Hall, 1807 S. Allport, \$80. 17+

In November, Chicago poet, teacher, and singer-songwriter Jamila Woods performed her 2016 debut album, *Heavn*, at the Harold Washington Cultural Center in Grand Boulevard. She brought in dozens of collaborators, including a youth choir, a small troupe of dancers, and a backing band. Several prominent young local poets of color, including Tasha, E'mon Lauren, and Eve Ewing, recited their work during interludes. The night paid tribute to contemporary Black Chicago and celebrated the joy its community can create. *Heavn*'s rich, layered instrumentation blends R&B, soul, and hip-hop with a similarly joyous energy, and that aesthetic remains—albeit with a starker, more synthetic feel—on Woods's new second album, *Legacy!* *Legacy!* (Jagjaguwar/Closed Sessions). The album's minimalist sound reflects a subtle shift in Woods's focus. While she continues to celebrate people of color who've provided her with the tools, perspective, and inspiration to develop her own voice—this time by name—she delves deeper into what it means to build her own path, both for her and for those following after. And tracks such as the effervescent "Octavia" (named after science fiction writer Octavia Butler) and the boogie-flecked "Frida" (Frida Kahlo) are irresistible enough to guarantee Woods a spot in the canon of contemporary greats. —**LEOR GALIL**

WEDNESDAY29

LAURA STEVENSON See *Pick of the Week*, page 30. See *Through Dresses and Completions* open. 8 PM, Beat Kitchen, 2100 W. Belmont, \$15. 17+



GOSSIP WOLF

A furry ear to the ground of the local music scene

WOLF BY KEITH HERZIK

WEST-SIDE RAPPER Malik Muhammad, aka **Musa Reems**, has gained serious traction in the local hip-hop scene since dropping the mixtape *Lately I've Been Sol Searching 2* in March 2018. He contributed to Nasim Williams's *Occult Powers* EP, released the full-length *Gamma Quietus*, and recruited Defcee for the single "Godspeed." This month Reems launched **Musa Mondays**, a series of five new singles dropped on consecutive Mondays. This wolf is particularly keen on the first, "Quarter Juice," which came out May 6: Reems unloads a steady stream of staccato bars, leaving himself barely any space to breathe. This week's single is "Not Know," and the series ends June 3.

Despite a crowded field, Gossip Wolf has decided to run for president in 2020. First platform plank: more rad concerts presented by college radio stations! (It'd be better to cancel student-loan debt, of course, but in the meantime, universities should at least entertain their noise-loving scholars.) On Friday, May 24, and Saturday, May 25, **WNUR** sponsors the experimental **Transference Fest** at **Elastic**, with sets from the likes of Mukqs & Sharkula, Gun Outfit, Ikue Mori, and Bergsonist of the Discwoman DJ collective. And speaking of crowded fields, on Saturday, May 25, **WHPK** throws its annual free midday bash on the **University of Chicago's Bartlett Quad**. The stacked lineup for **Summer Breeze 2019: Summa cum Loud!** features Negative Scanner, IfiHadAHiFi, Erik Nervous, Wet Wallet, and more.

With their new **Dumpster Tapes** cassette, **Holy Roller**, **Flesh Panthers** have made a turn from "scum punks" (Gossip Wolf's phrase) to "flower punks" (their own words). On "Ride the Blind," the greasy crooning and ringing guitar sound suited to a decadent French chalet—maybe next door to where the Stones recorded *Exile on Main St.*? On Friday, May 24, the Panthers celebrate at **Cole's** with Uncle Sexy & the Nephews and the Reverse Cowboys. —**J.R. NELSON AND LEOR GALIL**

Got a tip? Tweet @Gossip_Wolf or e-mail gossipwolf@chicagoreader.com.

CHICAGO SHOWS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT IN THE WEEKS TO COME

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B Boys 10/15, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Bailey Minzenberger & the Marquees 7/9, 7:30 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 5/24, 10 AM **ALB**
Bitchin Bajas, Axis: Sova, Brokeback, Musical Tracing Ensemble 6/14, 7:30 PM, Co-Prosperity Sphere
Blanco White 9/10, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 5/24, 10 AM **ALB**
Brontë Fall, Kacie Swierk 7/7, 7 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 5/24, 10 AM **ALB**
Buttertones 7/23, 8 PM, Chop Shop **ALB**
Caamp 11/16, 9 PM; 11/17, 9 PM, Thalia Hall, 11/16 sold out, 17+
Edie Carey, Anna Ash 10/6, 7 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 5/24, 10 AM **ALB**
Chicago Doomed & Stoned Fest day one with Torche, Forming the Void, Frayle, High Priest, Starless, Uncouth 5/31, 6 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+
Chicago Doomed & Stoned Fest day two with Coven, Blood Ceremony, Demon Lung, Bask, Witch Ripper, Wolf Blood, Wizzerd, Somnuri, Snow Burial 6/1, 3 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+
Barns Courtney 9/4, 7 PM, Park West **ALB**
Covet, Vasudeva, Holy Fawn 7/12, 7:30 PM, Schubas **ALB**
Kyle Craft & Showboat Honey, Flamingo Rodeo 7/18, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Den, Glassing, Dead Sun,

DJ B-Trip (Ben Billington), DJ 420 Web MD 7/9, 9:30 PM, Sleeping Village
Lee DeWyze 8/24, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 5/24, 10 AM **ALB**
Daniel Donato 9/27, 10 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 5/24, 10 AM **ALB**
Drab Majesty, Xeno & Oaklander, Body of Light 8/19, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Emo Nite 6/7, 9 PM, Subterranean, 17+
Freakwater 8/2, 6 PM, Hideout **ALB**
Hatchie, Orchin 9/12, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Hilltop Hoods 11/16, 9 PM, Subterranean, 17+
J. Worra, Codes, Dances With White Girls 6/1, 10 PM, Electric Hotel
Lil' Ed & the Blues Imperials 7/19, 8:30 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn, on sale Fri 5/24, 11 AM
Damon Locks's Black Monument Ensemble 6/2, 3:30 PM, Chicago Cultural Center, Sidney R. Yates Gallery **FREE**
Long Ryders 9/12, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 5/24, 10 AM **ALB**
Lula Wiles 9/25, 8 PM, Hideout
Magic Sword 11/3, 9 PM, Beat Kitchen, 17+
Midnight Sun 8/7, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 5/24, 10 AM **ALB**
Anais Mitchell 10/18, 10 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 5/24, 10 AM **ALB**
Typhanie Monique 8/11, 7 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 5/24, 10 AM **ALB**
Night Bass City with AC Slater and more 7/20, 3 PM, Theater on the Lake
Johari Noelle, Christian JaLon, Krystal Metcalfe 6/5, 7 PM, the Promontory **ALB**

Ocean Blue 11/3, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Oh Land, Arthur Moon 9/27, 7 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 5/24, 10 AM **ALB**
Omar featuring Mark De Clive 8/20, 8 PM, City Winery, on sale Fri 5/24, noon **ALB**
One More Time: Tribute to Daft Punk 7/13, 10 PM, Electric Hotel
DJ Oozing Dude 6/18, 9 PM, Sleeping Village **FREE**
Pnau 7/19, 8:30 PM, Park West, 18+
Kevin Andrew Prchal & the Wheeling Birds, Jess Robbins 8/29, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 5/24, 10 AM **ALB**
Prince Daddy & the Hyena, Retirement Party, Kississippi 8/27, 7 PM, Beat Kitchen **ALB**
Purple Mountains (David Beriman) 8/24, 9 PM; 8/25, 9 PM, Sleeping Village
Quebe Sisters 8/22, 8 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn, on sale Fri 5/24, 11 AM
Marc Rebillet 10/9, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Russian Circles, Facs 9/28, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 18+
Seratoness 9/7, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, on sale Fri 5/24, 10 AM
Summer Cannibals 8/10, 6:30 PM, Subterranean, 17+
Sun-Day Service dance party: Ye vs. World with Gemini Jones, Trilogy, Mile High, Sean Mac 8/11, 4 PM, Thalia Hall
Tony Terry 7/1, 8 PM, City Winery, on sale Fri 5/24, noon **ALB**
Julian Velard 8/22, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 5/24, 10 AM **ALB**
Weyes Blood 9/30, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, on sale Fri 5/24, 10 AM, 17+
Webb Wilder & the Beatnecks 7/27, 7 PM, SPACE, Evanston,

EARLY WARNINGS

on sale Fri 5/24, 10 AM **ALB**
Yuna, Skylar Stecker 7/14, 6 PM, Bottom Lounge **ALB**

UPDATED

Imelda Marcos, Big Syn, Not for You 7/12, 9 PM, Empty Bottle, rescheduled from 6/20

UPCOMING

Ziggy Alberts, Garrett Kato 6/27, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+
Joey Alexander Trio 6/28, 7 and 9:30 PM, City Winery **ALB**
Allah-Lahs, Tim Hill 8/16, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Fabian Almazan Trio 6/22, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+
Altan 8/7, 8 PM, City Winery **ALB**
Band of Skulls 9/24, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Banditos 7/26, 8 PM, Empty Bottle
Boulevards 6/19, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Buika 8/1, 8 PM, Patio Theater Hall, 17+
Built to Spill 7/5-6, 9 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Cake 8/8, 7 PM, Canal Shores Golf Course, Evanston **ALB**
Bill Callahan 7/7, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Alex Cameron 11/8, 10:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Jim Campilongo Trio 9/5, 8 PM, Hungry Brain
Toranzo Cannon 6/29, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston **ALB**
Lewis Capaldi 10/4, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Dead Meadow 6/13, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Deep Purple 10/18, 8 PM, Rosemont Theater, Rosemont **ALB**
Deerhunter 7/7, 9 PM, Metro, 18+
Delta Heavy, Kedzie, Ayoo, Bass-III 6/28, 8:30 PM, Chop Shop, 18+
Demons & Wizards, Lizzy Borden, Tyr 8/28, 6:30 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+
Brett Dennen 5/31-6/1, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston **ALB**
Karl Denson's Tiny Universe 6/22, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Raheem DeVaughn 6/7, 7 and 10 PM, City Winery **ALB**
Deanna Devore, Fay Ray, Cordoba 7/11, 8:30 PM, Sleeping Village
Digable Planets, Kweku Collins 6/20, 7 PM, Temperance Beer Company, Evanston, 18+
Divino Niño, Bunny, Girl K, Valebol, DJ Paulcherry 6/21, 9 PM, Empty Bottle
Downlink, Al Ross, Eliminate, Phiso 6/14, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+
Dressy Bessy, Colleen Green, Potty Mouth 6/26, 8 PM, Sleeping Village
Dropkick Murphys, Clutch 9/30, 6:45 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 17+
Dumpstaphunk, Magnolia Bou-

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levard 6/15, 11 PM, Metro
Earth, Helms Alee 6/23, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Fontaines D.C., Pottery 9/15, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Chris Forsyth & the Broken Mirrors Motel Band 7/13, 9:30 PM, Hideout
Gogol Bordello, Nu Folk Rebel Alliance 6/1, 7:30 PM, Riviera Theatre, 18+
Golden Vessel, Instupendo 7/13, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Gotobeds, Greys, Ethers 6/21, 9:30 PM, Sleeping Village
Glen Hansard 9/6, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre **ALB**
Indigenous featuring Mato Nanji 8/14, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston **ALB**
Iris Temple 6/15, 7:30 PM, Subterranean **ALB**
Felix Kubin 5/30, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Raja Kumari 6/13, 8 PM, Schubas **ALB**
Sonny Landreth 7/28, 8 PM, City Winery **ALB**
Greg Laswell 9/25, 8 PM, City Winery **ALB**
Cate Le Bon 7/19, 10 PM, Constellation, 18+
Dylan LeBlanc 6/23, 7 PM, Schubas **ALB**
Jacob Lee 7/24, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston **ALB**
Legendary Shack Shakers 7/28, 7 PM, Reggie's Music Joint
Steve Lehman Trio 9/21, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+
Sergio Mendes 6/30, 5 and 8 PM, City Winery **ALB**
Carrie Newcomer 6/9, 7 PM, City Winery **ALB**
Southern Culture on the Skids 7/10, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston **ALB**
Speedy Ortiz, Froth 6/29, 10:30 PM, Sleeping Village
Tropical Fuck Storm 9/14, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
T.S.O.L., Bollweevils, Mons, Kreutzer Sonata 5/31, 7 PM, Reggie's Music Joint
Jeff Tweedy, Ohmme 8/10, 7 PM, Canal Shores Golf Course, Evanston **ALB**
Tycho, Poolside 9/15, 8 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 18+
Waterboys 9/29, 5 and 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music **ALB**
Dale Watson 8/1, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston **ALB**
Wavves 7/28, 9 PM, Subterranean, 17+
Weeks 7/26, 8:30 PM, Schubas, 18+
Zveri 5/31, 7 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+ **FI**

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OPINION

SAVAGE LOVE

Drowning in each other's feelings

Advice on what to do when your friendship is more like a psychodrama

By **DAN SAVAGE**

Q: I keep running into the same issue with my best friend of five years. (She's also my maid of honor at my upcoming wedding.) We're both empath's—most of my friends are—and we're both in therapy working on how to cope with that. I have severe anxiety that impacts my physical health, so one of the empath-related issues I'm working on is not following through with plans when I need to take time alone. My friend claims she understands this but my actions severely impact her mood. Example: We'll make tentative plans to get together, I'll feel too sick to follow through, and then she's in a negative emotional spiral for days.

The final straw came when she called me late this past Friday night—just once, with no subsequent voice mail, text message, or follow-up call. On Monday morning, I sent her a text message asking how her weekend was and got an icy reply. Evidently, something happened to her on Friday, she called me for support, and my failure to return her call left her feeling very upset. I apologized for the accidental trigger and tried to lay down some protocols for reaching out in an emergency situation (leave me a voice mail and send a follow-up text) so I know it's urgent.

She hasn't replied. I'm really frustrated. She has a lot of baggage around being shamed for being emotional, so I try to be careful not to invalidate her feelings, but I don't know if that's even making a difference. We've had several conflicts over the last year, always trig-

gered by something I did or said, almost always accidentally, that caused her to "take a step back." She insists she understands I'm doing my best to be a good friend while also working through my own emotional shit. But that's not the sense I'm getting. I'm feeling increasingly like it's impossible to be a human being AND her friend. Until recently, I had zero emotional boundaries and made myself available to her at a moment's notice to help shoulder her emotional burden.

But now that I'm trying to be more conservative with my abundance and take better care of myself, it seems like all I do is hurt her. What the fuck do I do? I've tried to be open-minded and patient with her dramatic mood swings, but she seems unable to give me the benefit of the doubt, which I always try to give her. This rocky ground between us is adding more stress to the whole wedding situation. This thing we have is not sustainable as it is, although I love her deeply.

—EMOTIONS MAKING PERSONAL AFFECTION TOO HARD

A: Being so attuned to other people's emotional states that you feel their pain—being an empath—sounds exhausting. But Lori Gottlieb, a psychotherapist in private practice, isn't convinced your empath superpowers are the problem here.

"EMPATH's moods seem overly dependent on what the other person does," said Gottlieb. "That's not being 'an empath.' Most people are empathetic, which isn't the

same as what these two are doing. They're drowning in each other's feelings. This is what pop culture might call codependency, and what in therapy we'd call an attachment issue."

From your letter, EMPATH, it sounds like you might be ready to detach from your friend—you mentioned a final straw and described the relationship as not sustainable—and detaching would resolve this attachment issue.

"This feels less like a friendship and more like a psychodrama where they're each playing out their respective issues," said Gottlieb. "A friendship isn't about solving another person's emotional issues or being the container for them. It isn't about being devastated by another person's feelings or boundaries. It should be a mutually fulfilling relationship, not being co-therapists to each other. In a strong friendship, each person can handle her own emotions rather than relying on the friend to regulate them for her."

Gottlieb started writing an advice column because, unlike psychotherapists, advice columnists are supposed to tell people what to do. I'm guessing your therapist mostly asks questions and gently nudges, EMPATH, but since Gottlieb has her advice-columnist hat on today and not her psychotherapist hat, I asked her to tell you what to do.

"She should act more like a friend than a therapist/caretaker," said Gottlieb. "She shouldn't treat her friend or herself as if they're too fragile to handle basic communication or boundaries. And

EVEN WHEN IT'S JUST AROUND THE CORNER.

**NEVER GIVE UP
UNTIL THEY BUCKLE UP.**



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OPINION

they should both be working out their issues with their respective therapists, not with each other."

And if you decide to keep this woman in your life (and your wedding party), EMPATH, you'll both have to work on—sigh—your communication skills.

"Right now, they don't seem to know how to communicate directly with each other," said Gottlieb. "It's either an icy text or complaining to outside parties about each other. But when it comes to how they interact with each other, they're so careful, as if one or both might break if they simply said, 'Hey, I really care about you and I know sometimes you want to talk about stuff, but sometimes it feels like too much and maybe something you can talk to your therapist about.'"

Q: I will be driving to New Orleans from Toronto. It's almost impossible to drive from Ontario to Louisiana without stopping for fuel/food/hotel in Ohio, Georgia, or Alabama. But I want to boycott Handmaid states during my trip. Even then, I feel I have to check the news every day to see what state is next. Do you have any practical advice for me? Or should I just stay home until your democratic systems and your courts are fixed and your Electoral College

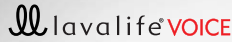
is abolished? —Canadian Avoids Nearing Terrible Georgia, Ohio . . .

A: Why head south, CANTGO? Even if you've lived in Canada all your life, you couldn't possibly have explored every corner of your beautiful country. But if you absolutely, positively must board the Titanic—excuse me, if you must visit the United States—take a hard right after you cross the border and head west instead. Enjoy Michigan's Upper Peninsula, check out some of those lakes they're always talking about in Minnesota, speed through the Dakotas, Montana, and the skinniest part of Idaho, and pretty soon you'll be in Washington State, where a woman's right to choose is enshrined in the state constitution. The summers are lovely, we've got hiking trails that will take you to mountain lakes, and Democrats control both houses of the state legislature and the governor's mansion, so you won't have to check the news every day when you're in Seattle.

CONFIDENTIAL TO EVERYONE: Anti-choice, anti-woman, anti-sex bills have been rammed through Republican-controlled state legislatures in Ohio, Georgia, Kentucky, Missouri, Arkansas, Utah, Mississippi, and

Alabama. "The new wave of anti-abortion laws suggests that a post-Roe America won't look like the country did before 1973, when the court case was decided," Michelle Goldberg wrote in the *New York Times*. "It will probably be worse." If these bills are declared constitutional—a real possibility now—doctors will be jailed, women who have miscarriages will be prosecuted, and many forms of birth control will be banned. If you're as pissed off as I am—and anyone who isn't can piss right off—please make sure you and all your friends are registered to vote so you can vote out anti-choice state legislators and governors in 2020. To be clear: right now, abortion remains legal in all 50 states. So you don't have to wait until next November to send a "fuck you" to red-state Republicans pushing these laws. Make a donation to an organization that helps women obtain abortions in red states—like The Yellowhammer Fund in Alabama (yellowhammerfund.org), Gateway Women's Access Fund in Missouri (gwaf.org), and Women Have Options in Ohio (womenhaveoptions.org). 

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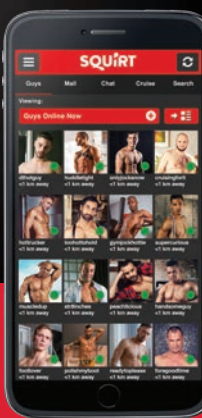
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OPINION



Kim Foxx JEFF MARINI

Have a strong opinion or perspective you'd like to share? We invite you to send ideas to pitches@chicagoreader.com.

SHAME ON US

Why we can't abandon Kim Foxx

Reformers across the nation are learning to be afraid.

By JANE M. SAKS AND EMMA RUBY-SACHS

We are facing a test and we are failing. Police and prosecutorial reformers across the country are watching us and Kim Foxx. They are watching the media attack her for the Jussie Smollett investigation and prosecution, watching the success of forces invested in taking down her mission and vision of reform. Across the country reformers like Kim Foxx are learning to be afraid.

We are teaching these reformers this lesson of fear by allowing the controversy surrounding one nonviolent incident to take all the oxygen, teaching them that it can obliterate the history-making reforms happening in our county. But these are the kinds of reforms we desperately need.

Kim Foxx had our support when she ran for Cook County state's attorney because we understood that the race was a chance to begin a national movement for policing and prosecutorial reform across the country with a fierce, smart, and visionary leader at the helm. We

stood with our two-week-old daughter in our arms at Kim's victory party, full of the faint, but burning, hope of a new future. Against all odds, it worked. Kim's election helped inspire Larry Krasner in Philadelphia and Kim Ogg in Houston and Rachael Rollins in Boston and continues to inspire campaigns and leadership in places where the most vulnerable are harassed, beaten, imprisoned, and murdered by police and prosecutors perpetuating a racist cycle of abuse.

Since that night, Kim Foxx, her office, and allies have achieved things we didn't think possible—they are the first in the nation to provide full transparency on felony cases, they are leading the nation in number of exonerations, and they are launching a push to start expunging minor marijuana convictions so that people can move on with their lives after "crimes" that are so inconsequential they will soon be legal. And, while doing all of this, Kim's office has increased successful gun prosecutions by almost 69 percent.

Kim's changing the conversation, bringing prosecutors into neighborhoods disinvested for generations and struggling with violent crime. These are communities, like Englewood, where residents almost never had an opportunity to meet anyone in the prosecutor's office before, until they were introduced in court. They are meeting in person, before tragedies, so that police and prosecutors can more closely serve the residents of communities and the victims of the cycle of violence. Foxx is calling out racism in our police force directly when it shows its face, as well as when it is less transparent. And she is a role model for a kind of law enforcement professional who brings strength, humility, humanity, and intelligence to a field marred by inequality, anger, hatred, and pain.

Democracy is not about one person. It is what we can do together, what we are willing to do together. This campaign to bring justice back to Cook County was never about Kim Foxx. It still isn't. It is about a national agenda to save lives, a national agenda of systemic change and justice. It is a campaign of humanity and equity, of who we aspire to be and not just merely living with how things exist. It is about changing our city and our county into a place where we can proudly and safely raise any child, live as any adult, anywhere and within a social contract that supports and values lives and futures. Any lingering concerns about Kim Foxx, her actions, and any alleged improprieties will be resolved by an independent inspector general report that promises to get to the truth and enforce any consequences demanded by the facts of the case.

So shame on us if we let minor controversy derail the most important, exciting, and impactful prosecutorial reform effort this country has seen in recent history. Shame on us if we abandon the history-making election of Kim Foxx over one incident of intrigue and fame and risk, sending the message to reformers everywhere that the massive movement behind you when you won will abandon you when things get a little tough. Shame on us if we stop the national march, struggle, and demand toward a fair and effective justice system—for all, not just for some.

Jane M. Saks is the president and artistic director of Project&, an arts organization that creates new models of cultural participation with social impact. Emma Ruby-Sachs is a writer, lawyer, and global campaigner for human rights. They live in Chicago with their daughter, Esmé.

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LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given, Pursuant to "An Act in relation to the use of an Assumed Business Name in the conduct of transaction of Business and in the State," as amended, that a certification was registered by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Cook County. Registration Number Y19001232 on May 1, 2019. Under the Assumed Business Name of Fye Girl Sunnies with the business located at: 11544 S Aberdeen street, Chicago IL, 60643. The True and real full name(s) and the residence address of the owner(s)/partner(s) is: Kashara Thigpen 11544 S Aberdeen Street Chicago IL, 60643. (5/23)

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to "An Act in relation to the use of an Assumed Business Name in the conduct or transaction of Business in the State," as amended, that a certification was registered by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Cook County. Registration Number: Y19001252 on May 1, 2019 Under the Assumed Business Name of SOUTHSIDE CHICAGO TCG with the business located at: 5117 S KIMBARK AVE APT 2, CHICAGO, IL 60615. The true and real full name(s) and residence address of the owner(s)/partner(s) is: EDWARD J KRYSTOSEK, JR. Complete Address: 5117 S KIMBARK AVE APT 2 CHICAGO, IL 60615, USA (5/30)

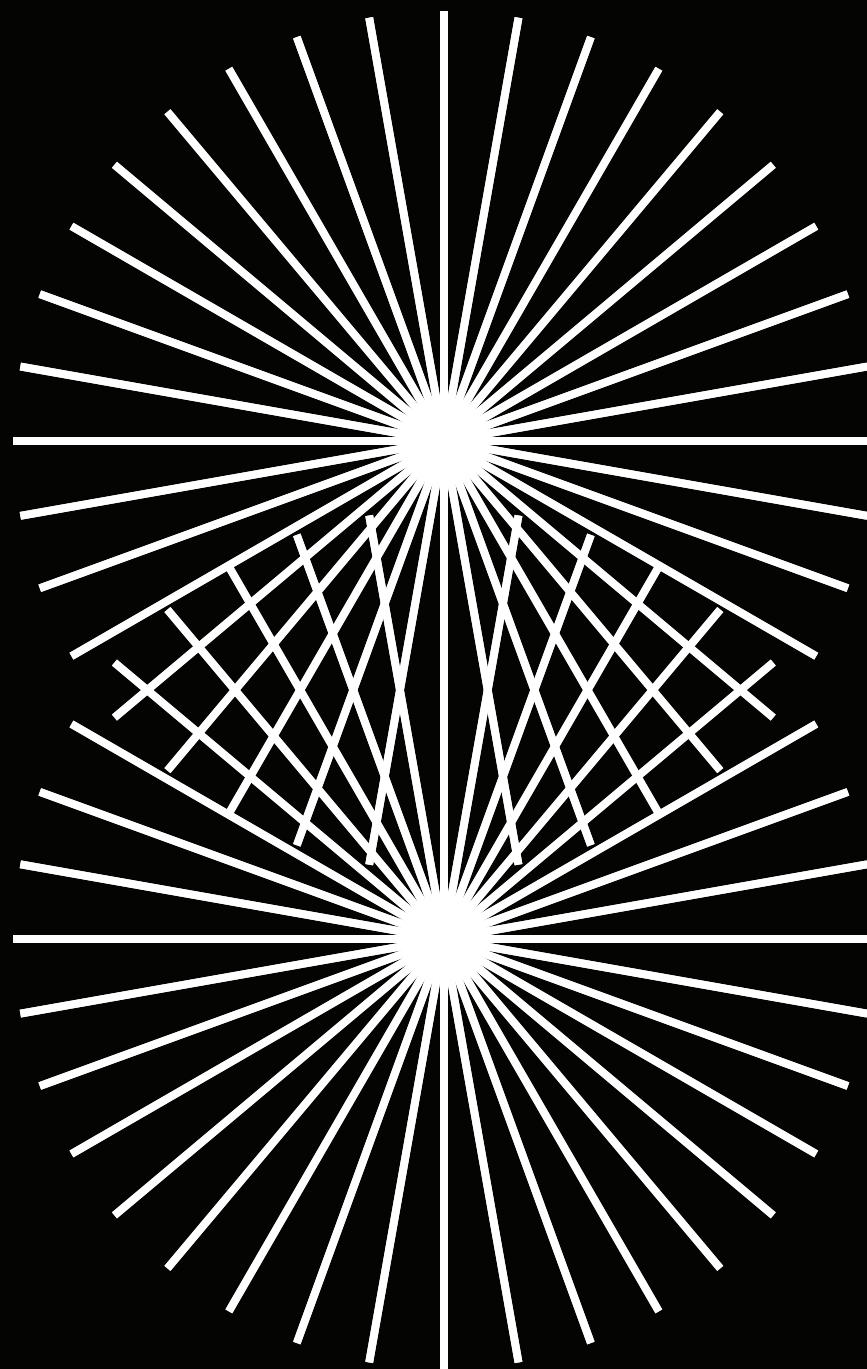
Notice is hereby given, pursuant to "An Act in relation to the use of an Assumed Business Name in the conduct of transaction of Business in the State," as amended, that a certification was registered by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Cook County. Registration Number: Y19001260 on May 1, 2019 Under the Assumed Business Name of BB + IDA with the business located at: 1437 Gunderson Ave, Berwyn, IL 60402. The true and real full name(s) and residence address of the owner(s)/partner(s) is: Owner/Partner Full Name: Jessica Ventura Duhig. Complete address: 1437 Gunderson Ave., Berwyn, IL 60402, USA (06/06)

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to "An Act in relation to the use of an Assumed Business Name in the conduct or transaction of Business in the State," as amended, that a certification was registered by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Cook County. Registration Number: Y19001299 on May 7, 2019 Under the Assumed Business Name of PECS DEVELOPMENT HOME DAYCARE with the business located at: 62 E 98th PL, CHICAGO 60628. The true and real full name(s) and residence address of the owner(s)/partner(s) is: Owner/ Partner Full Name: GEMISE JACKSON. Complete Address: 62 E 98th PL, CHICAGO, IL 60628, USA (06/06)

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to "An Act in relation to the use of an Assumed Business Name in the conduct or transaction of Business in the State," as amended, that a certification was registered by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Cook County. Registration Number: Y19001373 on May 17, 2019. Under the Assumed Business Name of GOLDBROCH FURNITURE AND DESIGN with the business located at: 1610 ASHLAND AVE, EVANSTON, IL 60201. The true and real full name(s) and residence address of the owner(s)/partner(s) is: Owner/Partner Full Name Complete Address SIMON GOLDBROCH 1610 ASHLAND AVE, EVANSTON, IL 60201, USA (06/06)



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